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# PUMPED

Rider: Shane Wode  
Photographer: Sean Lee

In late October many of Australia's downhillers flocked to Bali for the Asia Pacific Downhill Championships. There's always time to kill, and Sean Lee capture Shane Wode at play, riding a wall near where they were staying in a town called Padung Bai.











# PUMPED

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Rider: Chris Panozzo

Photographer: Damian Breach

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Chris Panozzo drops into the upper rock chute of Juggernaut, at Hollybank Mountain Bike Park, just outside of Launceston. The trail offers something for everyone, with double black diamond line choices and plenty of optional gaps to hit! It's also one of the longer continually descending man-made mountain bike trails around. Don't miss it if you head to Tasmania.





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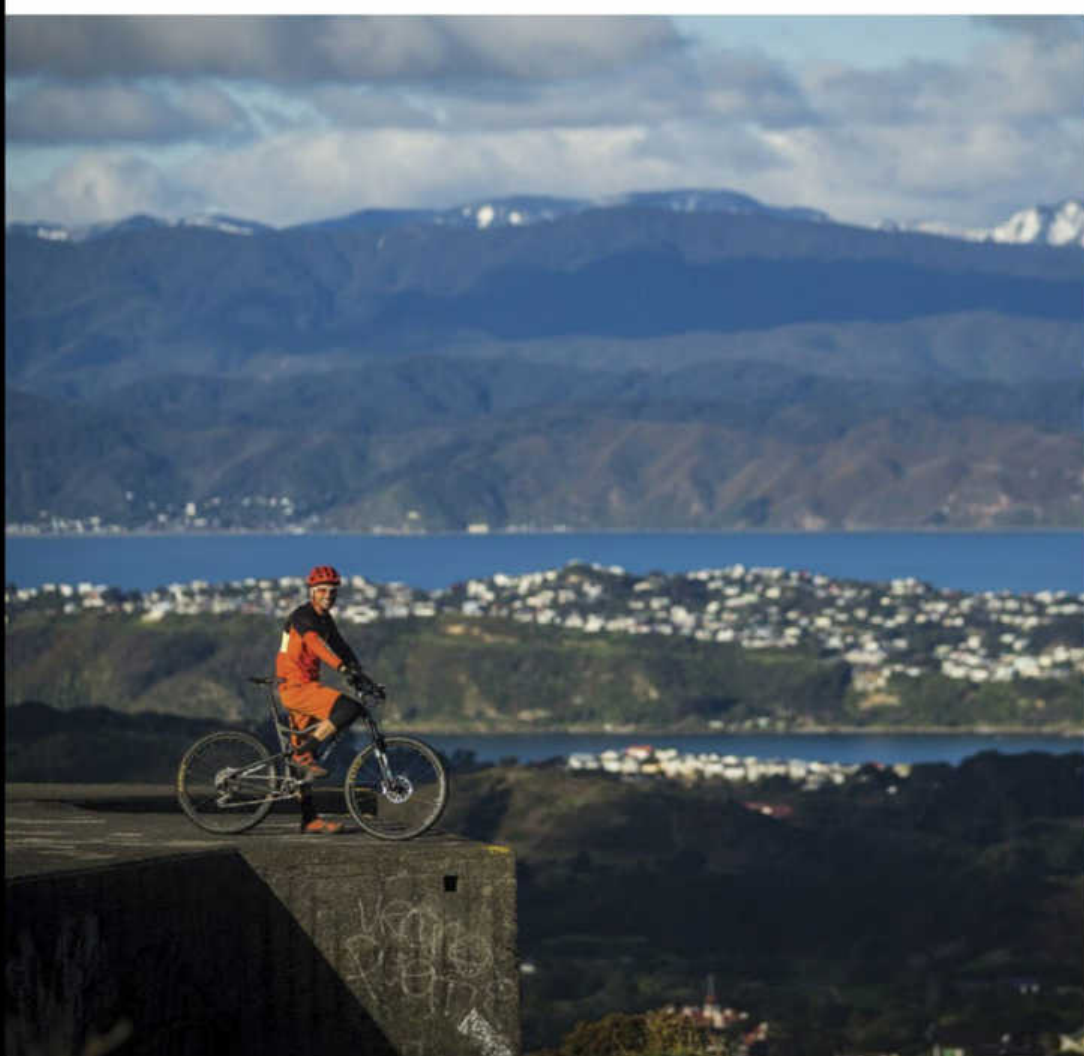
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# CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

WORDS: MIKE BLEWITT PHOTO: TIM BARDSLEY-SMITH

It is not big news that mountain biking is increasingly about what you want it to be, not about your speed down the hill, or around a course. What's really important about that is deciding what mountain biking is for you, and what it means to you.

If you're out riding on your local trails, chances are that plenty of people will have an opinion about what bike you are riding, or what equipment you are using. As mountain bikers, we are also likely to judge another rider by their bike, their helmet or their clothing. One rider might dismiss another's technical ability due to their preference of bib shorts and jersey. And some riders might not consider a rider in board shorts and singlet might be able to ride them off their wheel on a long technical singletrack climb.

As mountain biking continues to grow and diversify, so do the people doing it. But there is one common thread that ties so many different riders together – the quest for an escape. The need to get out and just ride, to break free, and to find that release that only getting out onto

the trails can provide. Whether that's riding the local riverside trails, or hitting the A line at a bike park, or committing to a big mountain route – the intrinsic rewards for each end every rider are actually just the same, if they are out there doing what they love.

So much of this issue is devoted to riders going out and finding something that suits their desire for adventure. From Hans Rey and Thomas Oehler getting way off the beaten track in Guatemala, to exploring the backcountry trails near Falls Creek, or mountain biking above the Swiss town of Engelberg – there's a level of adventure in each trip.

So along with our Places That Rock issue that's also on sale right now, hopefully you're inspired to get out and ride your bike during our long summer days. Get out, and choose your own adventure – whatever it is.





## PANOZZO AND PARKES ON TOP IN PALM COVE

While the UCI scratch their heads and the Enduro World Series (EWS) continues to grow, Mountain Bike Australia (MTBA) ensured there was an Australian Gravity Enduro Championship held, with official National Titles being rewarded after a weekend of racing in Tropical North Queensland.

The Enduro discipline, also known as Gravity Enduro, has been Mountain Biking's fastest growing competitive category in recent years. Plenty of mountain bikers favour the format's similarity to getting out and mountain biking – surviving the climbs, and letting it all out on the descents.

The event ran over 17-18 October in beautiful Palm Cove, with a transition ride taking riders to race stages at the iconic Smithfield Mountain Bike park, the venue of the 2014 and 2016 Mountain Bike World Cups.

While competition was fierce for the green and gold title in the men's event, Chris Panozzo came

into the event as the favourite, after confidently winning the 2015 National Enduro Series. The fastest rider in the prologue on day 1, Panozzo was almost untouchable on race day, winning 4 of the 5 stages to take the overall win by 10 seconds.

"It's pretty exciting to be the first Enduro National Champion" said Panozzo. "It was difficult out there today, a big day with changeable conditions, with rain during sections changing powdery dry trails into slippery clay".

Panozzo is now looking ahead. "The focus is now on solid training over summer, racing some Aussie downhill events with an eye on the Enduro World Series in 2016".

Second place went to Berend Boer of Queensland and Victorian Shannon Hewetson rounded out the podium in third.

In the women's event, the favourites were 2015 National Enduro Series winner Jaclyn Schapel

and Em Parkes. Parkes has had a landmark 2015, winning the Under 23 Cross Country National title and finishing in the top 10 for the Eliminator discipline at the World Championships. She would end up with the perfect race day in the Cairns rainforest, winning all 5 stages to record her second Enduro race win in a row to take the win and the National title – her second for 2015.

"It feels great" exclaimed Parkes reflecting on taking another National title. "It was a nice experience to re-ride some of the World Cup cross country course - it was a positive feeling to ride the A-lines, and it gives me good confidence going into the Cross Country World Champs in 2017".

Jaclyn Schapel took second place for the Elite Women and Angela Williams finished third.



## FALLS CREEK EXPANDS

Falls Creek have launched the latest stage of trails in late November, and their cross country singletrack will increase from five trails to 12 trails – with the majority of these being blue (intermediate) cross country. A few have All Mountain features and there will be some entry level green trails as well. All up the network to date will offer a brilliant experience for those familiar with the area as well as for those starting out.

With a great outlook, ready access to backcountry trails and an increasing singletrack network, Falls Creek is a great place to head this summer.

[FallsCreek.com.au/mtb](http://FallsCreek.com.au/mtb)





# HUBER TAKES 3RD CROCODILE TROPHY TITLE

In late October, the 21st Crocodile Trophy ran from Cairns to Port Douglas – the long way – taking in many of the great trails in Tropical North Queensland.

In 2015, the elite men's field was well stacked, featuring many national marathon champions, including our own Brendan Johnston. Over 9 days of racing, the Swiss professional Urs Huber proved he was the strongest, winning all but two stages, and taking the overall title. Having won in 2009 and 2010, Huber visited to experience the race and how much it has evolved in the past few years with shorter, more technical stages and a UCI S1 ranking.

"I'm really happy about my third victory at the Crocodile Trophy. This race has changed so much since I won it last in 2009 and 2010", Huber said. "Nowadays you really have to be a complete cyclist to win this event - you must have the skills and strength to do well on all terrains: singletrack, rainforest and bush trails and the wide open outback roads."

The event's Best Australian Brendan Johnston from Canberra finished third overall in the strongest elite field in the

history of this race, "This was the hardest race I've ever done and certainly the longest stage race. I'm still young and it was a fantastic experience to race with such strong racers from all over the world. To race onto the top-three podium, I'm happy with that."

Johnston agreed with Huber that it took a complete racer to win this event. "The Crocodile Trophy has everything you could ever imagine riding on a mountain bike – steep descents, long climbs. Technical singletrack, wide open roads. Rocky and sandy sections. Rainforests and bush. Outback and beach. Rain, mud and heat. There is literally nothing that mountain biking includes that isn't in this race", he said.

Sarah White from Cairns is the elite women's champion in 2015, finishing in 36h56:30 over the 9 days. "I really enjoyed this race, my first stage race. I'd love to race it again and would love to see more women in the field. It's a tough race, yes, but absolutely doable – to win so close to home makes me really proud", the steadfast ex-ultra marathon runner said.



## AMB100 RETURNS TO MT STROMLO

For the third year running we are sponsoring Rocky Trail's marathon opener for the year – the AMB100. Running on 14th February at Mt Stromlo, it's a perfect date for those that love singletrack, love mountain biking, and love a challenge.

The course for the AMB100 is approximately 30km of Mt Stromlo's finest trails, hand selected by Martin Wisata in the week before the event, depending on trail conditions. It's one of the only opportunities you get to race so many of the great trails at Mt Stromlo in such a large event.

There are 1, 2, 3 and 5 lap options of the race, with the 5 lap '100 mile' starting at 5am so racers can finish before the heat of the midday sun. Jason English has already shown interest, seeing the 100 mile option as the ideal last training ride before defending his WEMBO title in Rotorua the following weekend. Will Tobias Lestrell and Ed McDonald feel the same way?

The elite men's focus is on the 3 lap '100', and for elite women the biggest prize purse will fall on the two lap 66km event – which should match race times for the winners more equitably.

But beyond the elite racing, there is a category for everyone, whether you want to race for one lap or five, solo, or in the mates category. We'll be there in the expanded event centre, so come along and extoll your love of mountain biking!

*More details on [rockytrailentertainment.com](http://rockytrailentertainment.com)*



## WIN A MAMMUT 24 FATBIKE!

Fatbikes are versatile, and a really fun way for riders to get out and see trails differently, or even to get people new to riding a little more comfortable thanks to the huge air volume and gobs of traction. Outdoors International want to help get people offroad, and they've given us a Mammut 24 fatbike to give away to one lucky reader! The kid's size fatbike is suitable for teenagers or tall younger kids, and is likely to be a fun way to help get your kid into mountain biking, or give them a bit more ability to explore.

Just cruise over to [AMBmag.com.au](http://AMBmag.com.au) to enter the competition, and you'll go into the draw to win one of the Mammut 24 fatbikes. Full terms and conditions are online.





## MORE DIRT FOR THE BALLARAT CYCLE CLASSIC

The 2016 Ballarat Cycle Classic is a fun cycling and community event, raising valuable funds for the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute (FECRI). Two mountain bike options have been added using the White Swan Reservoir and the Goldfields tracks, with a 28km, 33km, 40km and 50km course available.

Adding another 10km loop to the 50km, there's an option that utilises all the hills that can be found and mixes it with fun singletrack and fire trail descents to provide a demanding but rewarding mountain biking experience.

One hundred percent of all registration fees support the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute.

[Ballaratcycleclassic.com.au](http://Ballaratcycleclassic.com.au)



## THE STAGE RACING WORLD TURNS TO NEW ZEALAND FOR THE PIONEER

Early in 2015, marathon and stage racers around the world had their interest piqued with news that a new paired seven day stage race was emerging. The Pioneer is set to take racers on a traverse of the Southern Alps of New Zealand's South Island. With a route that starts in Christchurch and finishes in Queenstown, racers will experience a beautifully rugged route and welcoming stage towns.

The route covers 546km with over 15 000m of climbing, so it's set to challenge even the hardest riders. Australian Olympian Dan McConnell will pair up with New Zealand's Anton Cooper to make a formidable duo in the men's category.

For those who aren't able to commit to a week of riding their mountain bikes in the Alps, the 3 Day Traverse is also available, and single day options too. The race starts on 31st January, but for full details check out the website.

[thepioneer.co.nz](http://thepioneer.co.nz)



## GIANT ODYSSEY DON'T MISS THE AUSTRALIAN CLASSIC

Bike races come, and bike races go. But the really good events, the events which have heritage and promise a rewarding experience, tend to hang around. The Giant Odyssey is one such event. I recall with great clarity riding the first iteration in 2007, starting down at Apollo Bay, before climbing the range to arrive in Forrest to race the great singletrack in the area. The race was hard-fought, but the trails were just reward. The event grew to be one of the most well-regarded mountain bike events on the Australian calendar – and with good reason.

For a few years now, the point-to-point event has gone, and the race now starts and finishes in Forrest for easier race logistics. There's a variety of course lengths on offer, and the elite men's and women's races have separate starts, to allow for truly competitive racing in this prestigious marathon race.

In 2016, the race celebrates its 10th anniversary, and 2015 champion Jenni King was one of the first racers to enter for 2016, keen to defend her title

"The Odyssey is one of the classic marathon events on the Australian calendar. The 100km course is one of the most demanding yet also rewarding with such a diverse range of trails. Winning the Odyssey was one of the highlights of my season, especially given this event attracts most of Australia's top mountain bikers. It certainly wasn't an easy victory with some close racing and I definitely don't expect 2016's edition to be any easier," said Jenni King.

For 2016, the race moves to an earlier date in the calendar once more, on Saturday 20th February. Sitting between National Rounds, and about 4 weeks ahead of the National XCO Championships, the Odyssey should draw a big elite crowd. But with races at 10, 30, 50 and 100km, there's plenty for reasons to get to Forrest for this Australian Marathon MTB Classic. Head to the Rapid Ascent website for full event details and entry.

[rapidascent.com.au](http://rapidascent.com.au)



## CAPE TO CAPE MTB

The eighth edition of the Margaret River's Cape to Cape stage race took place in late October, taking in the breweries, wineries, food, and beaches that this stunning region has to offer. Starting at Cape Leeuwin at the tip of WA's southwest coast, over four days the event travelled to the northern edge of the region, finishing on the fast and technical singletrack of the Dunsborough Country Club.

The men raced neck and neck all the way to the finish line on the last day, with Kyle Ward victorious, while Peta Mullens cemented her place at the top of Australian women's mountain biking with a win in the women's category. Jon Gregg and Marie-Claude Baars won the masters categories.

With 1,000 riders taking on the challenge, loads of social events, and plenty for families and friends to do, it's easy to see why this event is Australia's most popular stage race. Look out for our in-depth feature in the next issue of AMB. [capetocapemtb.com](http://capetocapemtb.com)



## GT BRINGS HANS REY TO THE BIKE BULLER PARTY

The GT Bike Buller Festival presented by Fox, has just been announced for 2016 with a huge range of stages for all types of riders. Taking place over the Victorian Labour Day long weekend (12-14 March) on Mt Buller's world-class trails, the Bike Buller Festival has three days of mountain biking plus festival fun at the popular Picnic in the Park food, wine and music festival at Mirimbah Park.

As an 'all-mountain' event using Mt Buller Bike Park's world-class cross-country, endurance and downhill trails, the festival is suitable for riders of all abilities and disciplines. The Bike Buller Festival will feature a massive event schedule with a diverse range of mountain bike races, kids' events and even a trail running component. Whether it's XCO, gravity racing, running, epic rides, downhill or eating and drinking – you'll be catered for at the Bike Buller Festival.

Keep the dates free and head to [rapidascent.com.au](http://rapidascent.com.au) for full details and entry.



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## LETTERS

Need to get something off your chest? Got a riding issue that you just can't get your head around? Go on, send us a cool letter and we'll do our best to answer it.

WRITE TO:  
amb@nextmedia.com.au or message us  
via facebook.com/AMBmag

PHOTO: @ROBERTCONROYCREATIVE

Hi AMB,

I just wanted to say that I thoroughly enjoy each AMB issue but I especially enjoyed the 150th issue!

Imogen Smith wrote a fabulous (and bigger than expected!) article about our hugely successful Chicks in the Sticks (CITS) women's only mountain bike race that was held last August (thank you SO much Imogen!). The day was so much fun and the tracks were amazing and a good challenge for all levels. We were thrilled to see so many happy faces.

This issue was particularly special also because it took me back to my early days of mountain biking. I really really enjoyed the "Creating the Culture of Mountain Biking" feature and how the 1990s made mountain biking.

I loved mountain biking back then and still do now.

I remember being very excited at the prospect of buying a pair of RockShox Judy forks for my steel framed Kona that I loved (It didn't end up happening as I couldn't get them to fit).

Oh how things have changed. I never saw another woman riding a mountain bike back in the early 90s so I just pushed myself to keep up with the boys. From then to now, and being on the committee for Australia's largest (and the club's inaugural) women's only mountain bike race - 20 odd years later.

The sport just keeps on growing and evolving, but more than ever in recent years. It is very exciting.

Anyway thank you again for the wonderful CITS race article and the trip down memory lane.

Thanks Mary Mitchelhill

Hi Mary,

Thanks for the feedback. It was great to see so many riders who were either new to the sport, new to taking part in events, or well experienced all out and enjoying the trails. Hopefully this is just the first step in further growth in mountain biking, and greater levels of women's participation. Not just in events, but in mountain biking in general.

And what was wrong with the Kona Project Two stock fork!?

Hi AMB Team,

I just wanted to drop you a line about your 150th issue. I've really enjoyed reading the magazine over the years, and while I don't always buy it I was really happy to pick up this issue. Great work - keep it up!

Jed Struthers

Thanks Jed - we really enjoyed putting that one together.



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In 2015 Hotel Komune launched its new Health Hub facility at the Bali resort after recognising demand from guests for further health and wellness experiences. The Health Hub features a yoga centre, 25m training pool, functional training centre, day spa, health café and fitness centre.

For more information, visit [www.komuneresorts.com/keramasbali](http://www.komuneresorts.com/keramasbali)



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# CALENDAR

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## XC/XCM/LAP BASED ENDURO

27-29 November	National XCO Rnd 1	Mt Taylor, VIC	<a href="http://mtba.asn.au">mtba.asn.au</a>
11-13 December	National XCO Rnd 2	Mt Stromlo, ACT	<a href="http://mtba.asn.au">mtba.asn.au</a>
23-24 January	Jetblack 24hr	James Estate Winery, NSW	<a href="http://rockytrailentertainment.com">rockytrailentertainment.com</a>
23-24 January	National XCO Rnd 3 + 4	Pemberton, WA	<a href="http://mtba.asn.au">mtba.asn.au</a>
30 January	Beyond Bank Duo Classic	Kowen Forest, ACT	<a href="http://duoclassic.com">duoclassic.com</a>
5-7 February	National Series Rnd 3	Thredbo, NSW	<a href="http://mtba.asn.au">mtba.asn.au</a>
14 February	AMB100	Mt Stromlo, ACT	<a href="http://rockytrailentertainment.com">rockytrailentertainment.com</a>
12-14 February	Snowies MTB Festival	Lake Crackenback, NSW	<a href="http://in2adventure.com.au">in2adventure.com.au</a>
20 February	Giant Odyssey	Forrest, VIC	<a href="http://rapidascent.com.au">rapidascent.com.au</a>
4-6 March	National Series Rnd 4	Toowomba, QLD	<a href="http://mtba.asn.au">mtba.asn.au</a>
13 March	James Williamson Memorial Challenge	Wingello, NSW	<a href="http://jameswilliamson.com.au">jameswilliamson.com.au</a>
17-20 March	National Championships	Bright, VIC	<a href="http://mtba.asn.au">mtba.asn.au</a>
26-28 March	Easter in the Alice	Alice Springs, NT	<a href="http://easterinthealice.com">easterinthealice.com</a>
2-3 April	Mont 24hr	Kowen Forest, ACT	<a href="http://selfpropelled.com.au">selfpropelled.com.au</a>
9-10 April	XCM National Championships	Derby, TAS	<a href="http://mtba.asn.au">mtba.asn.au</a>



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## ALL-MOUNTAIN/GRAVITY ENDURO

4-6 December	Cannonball Festival	Thredbo, NSW	<a href="http://thredbo.com.au">thredbo.com.au</a>
12-13 Decemebr	Victorian Enduro Tour	Mt Baw Baw, VIC	<a href="http://alpinegravity.net">alpinegravity.net</a>
16-17 January	Victorian Enduro Tour	Mt Buller, VIC	<a href="http://alpinegravity.net">alpinegravity.net</a>
20-21 February	Victorian Enduro Tour	Falls Creek, VIC	<a href="http://alpinegravity.net">alpinegravity.net</a>
12-13 March	Victorian Enduro Tour	Barjarg, VIC	<a href="http://alpinegravity.net">alpinegravity.net</a>
12-14 March	Bike Buller	Mt Buller, VIC	<a href="http://rapidascent.com.au">rapidascent.com.au</a>

## DOWNHILL

4-6 December	Cannonball Festival	Thredbo, NSW	<a href="http://thredbo.com.au">thredbo.com.au</a>
11-13 December	National Series Rnd 2	Mt Stromlo, ACT	<a href="http://mtba.asn.au">mtba.asn.au</a>
5-7 February	National Series Rnd 3	Thredbo, NSW	<a href="http://mtba.asn.au">mtba.asn.au</a>
4-6 March	National Series Rnd 4	Toowomba, QLD	<a href="http://mtba.asn.au">mtba.asn.au</a>
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# LOOKING FORWARD TO AN OLYMPIC YEAR

WORDS: JODIE WILLETT PHOTO: ROBERT CONROY

For anyone who frequently checks out the UCI Olympic nation ranking page, you may have noticed something concerning. For those of you who are thinking "what the hell is the UCI?" prepare to be educated. MTBA has no less than 6 disciplines under its umbrella, but only one of those is an Olympic event. No, it's not downhill. XCO stands for Cross Country Olympic and it has been included in the summer games since 1996. Australia has had a representative at each games, often more than one, however determining if we get to send riders and how many we send is a little confusing.

There are far less riders who can be selected for the Olympics Games compared to the World Championships. That, and the fact they're only on every 4 years, is one of the reasons and Olympic spot is so sought after. The maximum number of riders a nation can send is 5; 3 men and 2 women. But that's only for the top five or so nations as ranked by the UCI. How do we get Australia up the UCI rankings? By our top 3 male and female riders earning individual ranking points which are then added together to give Australia our National Ranking. Most countries High Performance strategies are centered on the goal of their riders earning more points.

So in the two years leading to the Olympics, it's a furious points chase by nations, especially those who are sitting just outside the cut-off for sending any athletes at all. As of the rankings released last week, Australia has qualified two places in the men's category. Unfortunately, our ranking for the women has dropped outside of the top 17, meaning we

## HOW MANY YOUNG RIDERS MIGHT BE INSPIRED TO TAKE UP MOUNTAIN BIKING WHILE WATCHING OUR AUSTRALIAN'S PERFORM ON THE OLYMPIC STAGE?

no longer are entitled to an outright spot. But all is not lost! There is an additional spot on the start line awarded to the Oceania region, which includes Australia, New Zealand and Guam. As Aussie rider Bec Henderson is the current Oceania champion, she still has the opportunity to represent us at the Games. Bec's strategy in 2015 was focused on securing that Olympic Games Women's place for Australia. Phew!

While this end of the sport only represents a fraction of the people who ride mountain bikes in Australia, it is the pinnacle of the sport for many and an event that showcases the best in the world. How many young riders might be inspired to take up mountain biking while watching our Australian's perform on the Olympic stage? Having one of our riders achieve a podium result also opens many doors in terms of funding from bodies such as the Australian Sports Commission which can be used to assist the next generation of riders develop.

There are still seven months in which to hold or advance our ranking before the final Olympic spots are decided. Perhaps the UCI ranking page will be a little busier now you all know how the system works!

[uci.ch/mountain-bike/ranking/](http://uci.ch/mountain-bike/ranking/)











# RACING AND THE PERSONAL MECHANICAL

WORDS: JODIE WILLETT PHOTO: ROBERT CONROY

It's amazing how far mountain bike racing has come in terms of catering for newer riders, and I'm certainly not alone when I say that women's racing is exploding at a grassroots level. When I started riding, the numbers of elite women racing at a national level were at record levels; the recent Dirt Roads to London campaign had catapulted an extra ten or so women into the previously dying numbers of women's cross country. What the sport didn't do so well was cater for brand new women riders and generally paltry numbers saw anyone with a shred of fitness struggling out in the elite category.

Ergo, I did my time struggling around in the elite category: without the race experience or riding experience to have a 'good time' I often just flogged myself around to the end and collapsed in a heap a long time after the winner had finished. Alternatively, I crashed my brains out and got carted away in the medical buggy.

Back then, it was easy to get overwhelmed with the racing, the course, other competitors and my own belief in self, being so new and untested. Fast forward a few years and the courses don't bother me so much, there will always be something a bit tricky but that's the fun part. I have a pretty well established race plan, I know what to do and don't worry so much about other competitors (cross-country mountain biking is, after all, the hardest solo offered time trial you will ever do with a bunch of other people).

Why am I talking about this? Well many of you will probably agree that mountain biking weaves its way into our souls a little. We think we have it sorted compared to those superficial roadies staring at the bitumen and checking their watts. We ride offroad, man; in the bush, amongst the trees. We are so, like, zen. We do jumps and skids; mountain biking is basically a legitimate form of play for adults! Any long-term rider begins to integrate mountain biking into part of their identity.

There something that is said in healthcare and emergency service professions that "we can end up going to work broken expecting to be fixed" paradoxically work is often the thin

that breaks us. This concept can also apply to the bike. I raced a local event in the hope that racing it would make me feel better, more like "me", when in reality it was the last place I wanted to be; I realised the struggle differed from those of my early days riding (freaking about the course, other riders, distance etc) but that of other stressors in life (work, other work and third work plus a kid, trying to ride my bike and keep it all together, and honestly not really succeeding).

It's never a great feeling not finishing a race, but identifying that the thing that is contributing to feeling so broken is probably not going fix you is a great bit of insight. Being a female racer can quietly add pressure if you let it, as a friend once said "there's still less of you (females) so you're more visible, people know when you haven't had a good race, there's always expectation"; even if it's predominantly pressure of our own making.

**"IF YOU'RE NEW TO THE SPORT ALLOW THE EXPERIENCE TO HAPPEN, SURROUND YOURSELF WITH GOOD PEOPLE TO HELP AS MENTORS AND GET INTO IT."**

What's the takeaway here? Be kind to yourself. If you're new to the sport allow the experience to happen, surround yourself with good people to help as mentors and get into it. After a while, being a mountain biker can become wrapped up in our identity and sense of self. When things don't go to plan remember none of us are professional athletes; you are more than a paper result and have families, work or study and other interests. T-shirts that say "you can never be sad on a bike ride" are lying, and definitely don't help if you're in a giant hole riding your bike and would rather be anywhere else. You can be sad goddamn everywhere (screw you t-shirt manufacturers). Riding bikes can bring you the highest of highs but I would argue can contribute to the lowest of lows. If you are in a giant hole without a mining headlight in sight, surround yourself with good people. If you need to, talk to some people with extra training in these things. Be kind to yourself, you'll get out of that hole.





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WORDS: KATH BICKNELL PHOTO: REILLY HURST

Glen Jacobs is a person whose name is synonymous with mountain biking. What started as a few mates pushing their bikes up hills and finding playful, two-wheeled ways to return to the bottom, has led to a career building trails that have come to define our sport. When the UCI saw the types of trails Jacobs and his crew were building in Cairns for the 1997 World Mountain Bike Championships, he was offered a job as a professional race track builder, the first in the world.

Fast forward almost twenty years, and Jacobs' company, World Trail, has moved from designing tracks for racing to delivering world class experiences for recreational riders. The sport's biggest growth area is now adventure tourism and, as Jacobs is quick to point out, this means more people riding bikes, more often.

"People will travel to a destination to ride," says Jacobs likening mountain biking to other popular landscape-based sports like skiing or climbing. "You are going to travel to Atherton, you are going to travel to Derby, you are going to travel to Stromlo, in Canberra, you are going to go to all these different places to ride."

Atherton, in Tropical North Queensland, Derby, just outside of Launceston, and Canberra's Stromlo Forest Park, are just a few of the places where mountain bike tourism has become a critical part of the economy because of World Trail's work. Key to the success of these trail networks is a design philosophy that caters to a recreational majority and gets the broader community on board.

Jacobs explains that when you look at mountain bike sales, 78 per cent are to the green circle and blue square riders. "We build trails for them. We build for the people who will evolve the sport; who want to get better."

The remaining 22 per cent is split almost equally between beginner riders, and the core group of riders and racers that drive innovation and the sport's image. "Of course we build core trails, all



that World Cup stuff, we've done that for years," says Jacobs, who was recently inducted into the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame in California, USA.

If you primarily build double black diamond trails, riders who are new to the sport will make a quick exit, Jacobs explains. The growth of the sport and its infrastructure will come to a quick halt.

"If you build for the beginners – and we're not talking footpaths, we're talking mountain bike trails, like Atherton – people will go and ride, and they will enjoy the sport. It keeps you within the activity if you have trails to ride on that aren't going to hurt you."

While the extensive Atherton trail network certainly caters to the 78 per cent-ers, there are several sneaky line choices throughout the park that advanced riders will spot to keep them on their toes. For beginners, who are less skilled with picking a line and finding good flow, piles of rocks on the sides of the trails are cleverly used to guide riders' eyes, bodies and tyres. "We watch the tyre marks of what the locals ride and we can move the adjustment chokes in or out. You can make it faster or slower if you like, so you end up having the perfect flow."

Predictability is also key, as is constantly refining what good trail building means. "I get a question sometimes, 'Which is your best trail?' Well, probably the latest one. The one we're building right now!" says Jacobs. "We've got all our history of whatever we've built. Stonefly (at Mt Buller) is still fantastic, but we've evolved from there. Everything we learned from Stonefly, we put in Ridgy Didge, Trail 6, at Atherton."

After Atherton, the crew returned to Mt Buller to build the 40km IMBA epic trail. The lessons learned from those trails informed the team's work in Derby. "The terrain sort of depicts what the outcome's going to be," adds Jacobs, "because of the soil, the rocks, the hills, the slope and everything like that. But again, every minute, every hour, every day, we are getting better at what we do."

As a rider, travelling from one destination to another, you can feel this evolution in the way the terrain uses the hill, the way your body moves through corners, and how up hill transit trails feel increasingly effortless. A growing number of other trail building companies are bringing their own style to the sport too. So what's next?

"I would say probably more wilderness trails," says Jacobs, looking at what's going on overseas and adapting it to the growth of the sport locally. "Trails that radiate out from the townships, and linking the towns."

"Things like in Canada where you've got these trails that go for days on end. They exist in North Queensland, they're everywhere, but they haven't been formalised yet for mountain biking. You know, signage, links, going from one mountain top, to a waterfall, to another valley to a mountain top, and days and days on end."

Achievable adventures are about to get even bigger. Whether you're in the 78 per cent, or sit on one side of it or the other, there's no doubt that with the current boom in mountain bike tourism, it's certainly an exciting time to be involved.





# A SENSE OF *ADVENTURE*

THE AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE FESTIVAL // RUN . PADDLE . MTB WORDS: WIL BARRETT PHOTOS: JANITHA JAYASINGHE

**As mountain bikers, the desire to explore runs thick within our blood. In contrast to many others in our species, us mountain bikers love escaping the clutches of our urbanised dwellings and travelling to places that we've never been before. We crave any opportunity to experience adventure, adrenaline, and the rawness of Mother Nature. Stripped back to its most basic elements, this is to me what mountain biking is all about.**

But we're not alone in our desire to explore the outdoors. In fact, us mountain bikers happen to share a lot in common with our fellow hikers, kayakers, trail runners, cycle tourers, surfers, and adventure seekers. Sure, we might use different equipment to do so, but when it all boils down, we all share the same fundamental desire to escape the city at any chance we get, and to seek out adventure and fun.

Over the final weekend in October, the very first Australian Adventure Festival was held in Lakes Entrance, Victoria. A truly one-of-a-kind event, the festival ambitiously

aimed to bring together mountain bikers, trail runners, paddlers, and their families, all to the one location for a weekend of outdoors activities and racing. With East Gippsland providing the pristine backdrop for the festival, it was a unique opportunity to have a bunch of like-minded people come together to appreciate this beautiful environment and enjoy everything it has to offer.

And so with a purpose to find out more about the riding in East Gippsland, I gladly escaped Melbourne on a busy Friday afternoon, and made the journey

over to Lakes Entrance for a weekend of outdoors immersion.

## **DISCOVERING EAST GIPPSLAND**

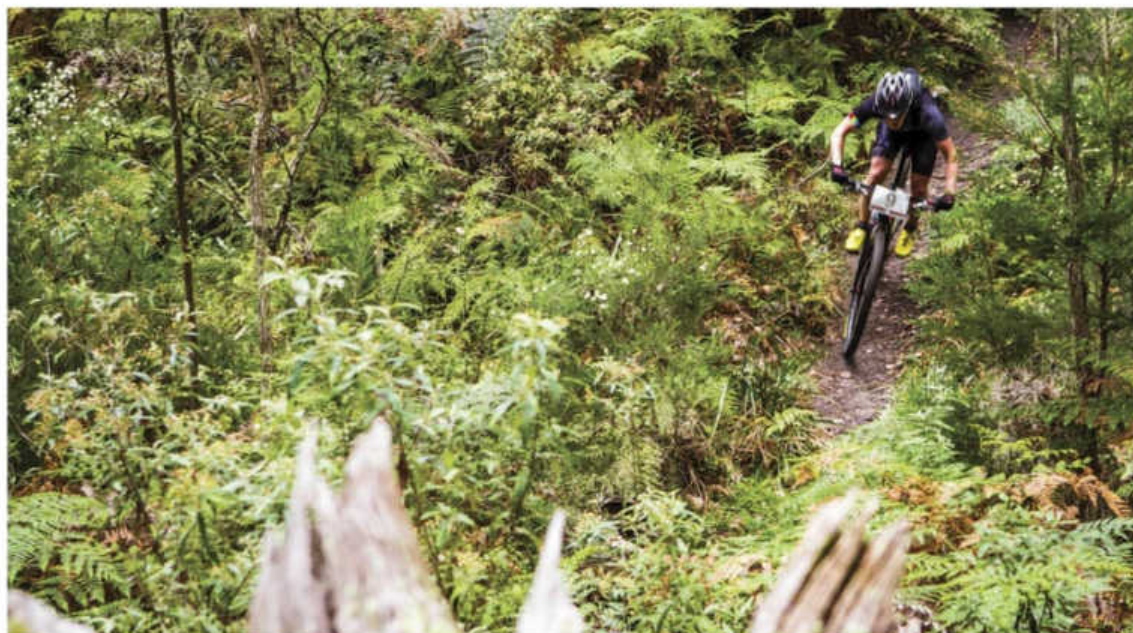
It was many years ago that I last visited Lakes Entrance. As a young boy, I remember holidaying with my parents there, where we walked along the shore of Ninety Mile Beach, explored the stalactites of the Buchan Caves, and rode our bikes along the East Gippsland Rail Trail.

Located about a 4-hour drive East of Melbourne, Lakes Entrance is sandwiched in the South East corner of Victoria, where it separates the Gippsland Lakes from Bass Strait.

This tranquil seaside town has long been known as a family-friendly holiday destination, attracting surfers, fishers, horse riders, canoeists, walkers, cyclists, and foodies alike. It's a popular tourist destination, and especially with water-loving folk who are able to access both freshwater and saltwater river ways.

Over the past few years, the wider East Gippsland region has also increasingly becoming known for outdoors activities such as mountain biking. Within Lakes Entrance, you'll find a well-manicured network of trails in the Colquhoun forest, which is encouraging more holidaymakers to bring their mountain bikes along for the trip. Just 20 minutes drive up the road, there's also the Nowa Nowa Mountain Bike Park, which contains over 20km of purpose-built mountain bike trails. Head 30-minutes east of Lakes Entrance towards Bairnsdale, and you'll find





the highly regarded trails of Mt Taylor. There's a green XC loop, a double-black diamond downhill run, and a shuttle-accessible all-mountain trail that has seen some serious work put in by the crew from Dirt Art. To give you an indication of the riding quality on offer, Mt Taylor recently played host to the 1st round of the MTBA National Series. Go further west back towards Melbourne and you'll find even more riding. Popular destinations include the Erica MTB Park, Mt Baw Baw alpine resort, and the Blores Hill network, where the Gippsland Mountain Bike Club hosts their 6-hour race – [gippslandmtb.com.au](http://gippslandmtb.com.au).

On top of that, Lakes Entrance also forms the southern gateway to the Victorian Alps, with Falls Creek, Bright and Mt Beauty all lying within a few hours drive north. Of course Lakes Entrance still remains the relaxed seaside destination it was all those years ago when I first visited, but with an abundance of new riding destinations popping up all over the region, it's easy to see why a holiday to East Gippsland is becoming a whole lot more appealing to mountain bikers looking for a road trip adventure.

#### THE FESTIVAL

The main event of the Australian Adventure Festival was Sunday's 'One Day Challenge'; an Xterra-style adventure race that saw competitors take on a 35km mountain bike leg, followed by a 12km paddle and a 16km trail run. This off-road

***"We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures that we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open."***

***– Jawaharlal Nehru***



triathlon race attracted some big hitters of the adventure racing scene, including world champions Richard & Elina Ussher, and Australian multisport legend Jarad Kohler.

In addition to the One Day Challenge, the festival put on individual events for the Saturday, which included a mountain bike race (50km & 100km options), a 14km-paddling race, and two trail running races (21km & 55km). On top of that, there were also plenty of activities for the kids, as well as 5km and 10km fun runs/walks for families and beginners.

I signed up to the 50km mountain bike event, which was held in the Colquhoun Forest just outside of Lakes Entrance. A 25km loop was setup, meaning the 50km riders would complete 2 laps, while the 100km competitors would take on 4 laps. Not only did this lap-style race offer a great buzz around the transition area as riders came in and went out on their next lap, it also made for easier planning with nutrition and hydration.

The track itself was superb, taking riders along a windy course through a forest filled with towering Stringybark and Silvertop Ash Eucalyptus trees. The dense undergrowth offers up nearly every shade of green, with tree ferns lining the trail in a way that had me reminiscing of riding in places like Forrest in the Otways.

Much of the trail is well established, with a fast hardpack surface and gently sculpted corners that allow you to carry plenty of pace. In particular, the 'Lollypop' trail served up a veritable feast of berms and rollers to pump through, and it proved to be a universal favourite amongst riders. Built with impeccable flow, the trail saw riders

careen from one side of a gully to the other like they were riding some kind of enormous dirt half pipe. This gravity-fed trail would make the trip to Lakes Entrance worth it alone.

#### CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

Overall, the inaugural Australian Adventure Festival was an absolute hit with all the competitors who made the trip to Lakes Entrance. Compared to a dedicated mountain bike race weekend, there were far more families present, as the diversity of events on offer broadened the appeal significantly. I spoke with many couples where one person was participating in the trail run, while the other was riding around the mountain bike course. I also spoke with many new riders across different backgrounds and ages, all of who were positively hooked on mountain biking after their first foray into the sport.

With that assessment, I'd say the Australian Adventure Festival was a resounding success, and I'm already looking forward to seeing it grow and evolve over the next few years. The festival certainly achieved its goal of highlighting the scenic East Gippsland environment, and it allowed riders like myself to discover a whole new range of trails that we'd never ridden before.

To book in for next year's festival, head to [adventurefestival.com](http://adventurefestival.com) for more information. Want to explore the trails in the meantime? Then get in touch with Lakes Entrance-based company Venture Out, who offer rental bikes and guided tours of the region.









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BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA, AND ITS KOOTENAY MOUNTAINS ARE WORLD RENOWNED FOR HELICOPTER AND SNOWCAT ACCESSED SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING. IN FACT, THEY WROTE THE BOOK ON THIS TYPE OF SNOW PLAY. WHEN IT COMES TO DIRT, HOWEVER, RETALLACK, A SMALL LODGE NESTLED IN THE HEART OF THE KOOTENAY MOUNTAINS, IS CURRENTLY DEFINING THE BACKCOUNTRY MOUNTAIN BIKING EXPERIENCE. THEIR APPROACH OF REMOTE MOUNTAINOUS LODGING, ACCOMPANIED BY PHENOMENAL RIDING MAKES THE UNIQUE GETAWAY NOTHING SHORT OF A TWO-WHEEL WONDERLAND.

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WORDS AND PHOTOS BY BEN GAVELDA

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The Kootenays are literally and figuratively misty. The rugged terrain and verdant, cloud-soaked forests hide some of the best mountainous activities in BC from thermal hot springs to loamy singletrack. The area makes up a large portion of southeastern British Columbia, spanning from the U.S. and Alberta borders, clear up to the towns of Revelstoke and Golden. The name stems from the Ktunaxa (Kootenai or Kutenai) First Nation people and the massive Kootenay River, a tributary of the grand Columbia River—the largest river in North America that pours into the Pacific Ocean. In the heart of this vast wilderness, bordered by Slocan Lake to the west, Kootenay Lake to the east, Goat Range Provincial Park to the north and Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park to the south sits the mountain biking haven of Retallack.

My inaugural trip to this fabled retreat began near Vancouver with a mixed bunch of riders piled into Wade Simmons' Shore Play guiding van. And not just any van, a heinous black Ford with hot rod flames painted along the sides and a grip of bikes

dangling off the back. We took the more scenic Highway 3 route while stopping at the Okanagan Valley fruit stands and dodging deer before arriving at night. Being a relatively new operation we were unsure what to expect. Could a place that delivers some of the finest snowcat skiing and snowboarding offer a similar experience suited for mountain bikers? Tired and curious like the old pioneers who came to this area in search of gold and silver, we were here to dig our tyres—rather than pick axes—in the ground.

Once a buzz of mining, fur trade and logging activity, Retallack and the Nelson area was at one point larger than the seaside city of Vancouver. Retallack, founded in the 1800s, was built around a mining operation at the present day lodge. A lad by the name of J.C. Eaton pulled nearly a million dollars worth of ore from this terra. As with mining operations in much of western North America, things dried up and rusted away by the mid 1900s, but remnants of the mining past are still present around Retallack.



Now faint rust flakes are found on the shovels, picks and tools used to mine trail, not valuable ore. Although the mining paved the way for the surrounding quaint mountain towns like New Denver, Kaslo and lodges like Retallack, it's tourism and remote mountain beauty that presently thrive here. Mining and logging roads left from the operations are key to accessing the trails via van shuttles in and around Retallack, so much is owed to the past pioneers.

The present pioneers are talented local riders like Mike Kinrade (who is also Retallack's lead mountain bike guide), pro Garrett Buehler, Kurt Sorge and a number of others who've helped develop the freeriding scene in the Nelson area, making the place a hotbed for progressive riding and terrain. The evolution of riding is evident in the trails Retallack services as well, from old and steep skidder trail, to the ever flowing (and more sustainable) purpose-built tracks on Retallack's private tenure. The pride and joy of Retallack is a newly etched trail called Peak To Creek. The

trail starts on top of the shale-laden Recco Peak and winds all the way through benched alpine tundra and cedar forest to the valley floor in 16 kilometers with 1,800 meters of descent. Unless Retallack is running 4x4 truck shuttles (plus a hike-a-bike), this trail is generally accessed with a helicopter drop off, a rare thrill in itself.

Perhaps you've seen images from Kurt Sorge's Fest Series here, where he, fellow riders and the Retallack crew constructed some of the largest mountain bike jumps to date. Maybe you missed that, but you caught one of Garrett Buehler's video segments. He likely filmed it on the jumps and trail he constructed here, too.







### Daily Deal

The daily vibe at Retallack goes like this: Wake up early and partake in the morning yoga or stretch class. Or sleep in a bit longer if you need. Get the motor stirring by sipping coffee in the cool quiet of the deck. Scarf a scrumptious breakfast buffet. Load up the van and rally as much trail as your body and bike can take. Take a lunch break out in the mountains or at the lodge. Continue the trail tear. Return to the lodge for après drinks and eats in the afternoon. Hit the sauna, hot tub, massage or pump track—one or all of the above, not necessarily in that order. Savor the gourmet dinner. Partake in a bit of neglin' (see below), bar activities or balance board Jenga. Sleep. Repeat day one three times, yet substitute one day for heli-accessed biking. Depart with scheme of how to return again, for longer.

### Neglin'

This crude game composed of a pointy hammer, pin nail, beer and stump is a Retallack right of passage. It's also referred to as 'Stump' or 'Nails' by the Yanks, or *Hammerschlagen* or *Nagelspielen* by the German pioneers. It's simple: you and your mates stand around a stump with beers in hand, each with a pin nail slightly tapped into the wood slab in front of you. Turns go around the block with one swing each to bury the pin-nail. Whoever slams the nail flush first, wins. It's the logger's equivalent of prime time TV.







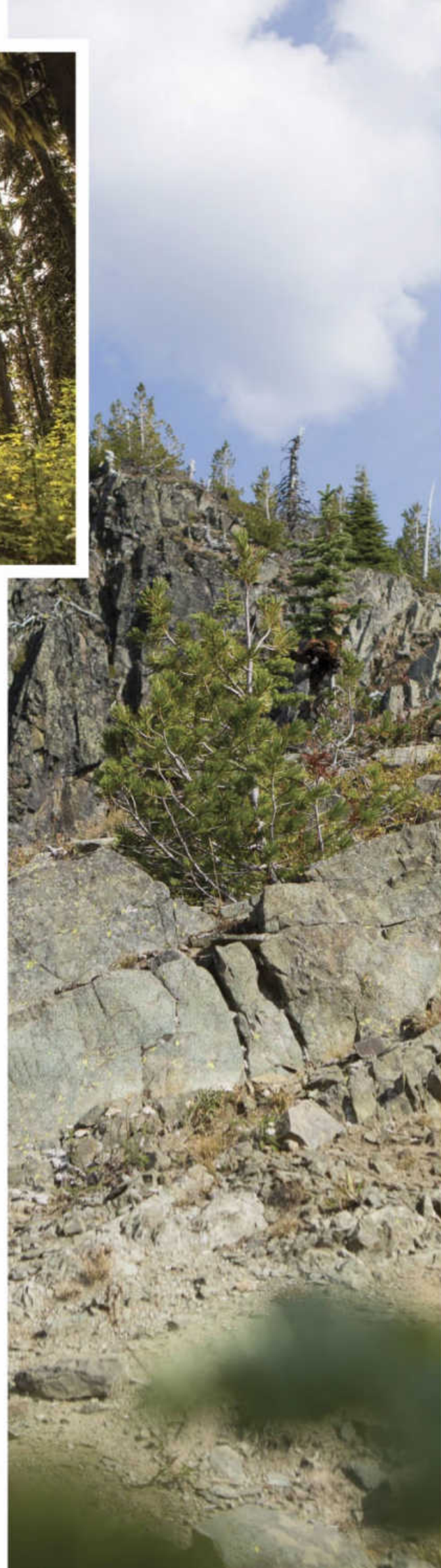
Possibly you missed all that, but you've seen the film *Life Cycles*. Portions of the movie were filmed on the Powerslave trail outside of Nelson, also one in Retallack's guiding tenure that requires a helicopter drop off in the high alpine tundra. These pro-level pursuits present one end of the spectrum at Retallack, yet one doesn't need to hurtle themselves off a jump to enjoy the area's riding. There is trail to satisfy just about every rider and the aid and encouragement of amiable bike guides helps, too. This was evident in our initial trip.

Legendary riders Wade Simmons, Brett Tippie and Richie Schley were sharing rides with guests from all types of riding backgrounds and homelands. There was a mixed bunch from Washington, Alberta, Oregon, Colorado and even Germany who all made the trek to the trails.

## IT'S THE SIMPLICITY OF BEING IN REMOTE MOUNTAINS AND THE QUIET RESERVE IT PROVIDES, PAIRED WITH WORLD-CLASS TRAIL.

Three days of being couriered to the trail went quick. We warmed up on Retallack's private trails through the cedar forests right out the front door of the lodge. Then we moved onto longer descents in nearby Sandon and New Denver, and the next day skidded down old, worn and rowdy trail. The last day was marked with a helicopter operation to a peak above Nelson. Loads of bikes and guests were ferried up with the chopper. After enjoying an alpine picnic we began our descent of Powerslave, a incredible ride that took us from rocky and exposed alpine tundra through damp, loamy and primitive trail all the way back to the town of Nelson below. Each day back at the lodge we were rewarded with a gourmet dinner and as much après, hot tub, sauna time as one could take. Since that inaugural trip I've returned and witnessed the trails and operation evolve. The quality of riding at Retallack is the obvious standout, especially with the new Peak To Creek trail, but it's the lesser bits that truly complete the experience. It's the simplicity of being in remote mountains and the quiet reserve it provides, paired with world-class trail. It's the smell of wet cedar as

you brush through the forest and drift over the rugged, rooty, loamy and iconic Kootenay trails. It's the pause after exiting the van atop a peak to soak up views of the rugged mountain horizon, Kootenay and Slocan lakes, or Kokanee Glacier. Then it's gorging on wild berries and embarking on a massive descent into the valley below, back to the castle stocked with food, beer and fun. Here at Retallack you get to live like a poor miner who struck gold, at least for three days.







## **The Skinny**

Rates: 1,134-1,617 CAD/per person

*Trip Includes:* Professional guiding. Two days of van based shuttling and one day of helibiking. Three nights accommodation at Retallack Lodge based on double or triple occupancy. Hot tub, sauna, games room, entertainment room, and massage therapist. All daily gourmet meals and après-ride hors d'oeuvres are included. Medical Insurance is included for non-British Columbia residents. All Federal and Provincial Taxes are included.

More details at [retallack.com](http://retallack.com)

## **Bike To Bring**

The riding at Retallack is all shuttle assisted. That's not to say there isn't some pedalling here and there, but it's mostly descending. A hearty full suspension trail bike with 140-170mm of travel is perfect. A longer travel freeride or downhill bike will also thrive at Retallack. Remember, the closest bike shop is well over an hour away so make sure your bike is dialed and be sure to bring a few spare parts like tubes and brake pads. If you don't want to haul your rig across the sea, Retallack offers rentals as well as The Sacred Ride in Nelson.

## **Fly To**

Retallack is remote and involves a flight and vehicle rental. The closest airport is Castlegar (also named Cancel-gar from the often weather-interrupted flights). Spokane, Washington and Kelowna, BC are decent options that involve a 4-5 hour drive. Vancouver is about a 9-hour drive.

## **In The Neighborhood**

Plan some extra days to explore riding in the Kootenays around the Nelson area. Check out the flow trails at the newly developed Morning Mountain, or tick off some classics in the Small Wood or North Shore riding areas. The Nelson Cycling Club ([nelsoncyclingclub.org](http://nelsoncyclingclub.org)) has some great info and maps on riding the area. There are also some trails around New Denver, and plenty of riding to be had north around Revelstoke, too. Be sure to soak those battered bones in any number of hot springs within an hour or two drive like Ainsworth, Halcyon, Nakusp, Halfway or Coyote.

## **Eats**

The cuisine at Retallack is gourmet, from breakfast to après Caesars. They have a full bar, and things are known to get a little wild. Nelson is also a gastronomy hub with a good mix organic fare, fine coffee and hearty suds. Here are a few spots worth checking in Nelson:

All Season's - Baba's Indian Cuisine - Bibò  
Cantina Del Centro - El Taco - Main Street  
Diner - The Royal Grill

Beer of choice: Nelson Brewing Company  
Harvest Moon Hemp Ale  
Coffee shop stop: Oso Negro







# TAKING THE HIGHER ROAD in GUATEMALA

HANS REY WITH TOM OEHLER  
PHOTOS: STEFAN VOITL





**A** YOUNG MAN; 18 YEAR OLD KEVIN, STANDS ON A DUSTY STREET CORNER ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA. TWO YEARS AGO HE RECEIVED A BICYCLE FROM WHEELS 4 LIFE THROUGH HIS SCHOOL; “ESCUELA PROYECTO LA ESPERANZA” WHICH WAS FOUNDED AND IS RUN AS A UK BASED CHARITY. THEY PRODUCE AN EXCELLENT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE EXTREMELY POVERTY STRICKEN PEOPLE OF THE ANTIGUA AREA IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

Kevin jumps on the back of our pick-up truck and guides us to his humble home where he lives with his mother, it is a primitive brick building with a metal door and no running water. His room is tiny and beside his bed he stores his few belongings, which consist mainly of clothes, school supplies and apart from his football trophies; his most precious possession, his beloved bicycle.

Thanks to this bicycle he can travel to school much faster and be more punctual, his family cannot afford the 1 Quetzal (13 cents) for his bus fare on a daily basis. Kevin is now taking a university course to complete his education and in so doing is building himself a platform for a brighter future. His passion is football, but he rides his bike up a steep hill by his home with ease and cruises the 10km journey to school through cows and traffic like a New York bike messenger; I had to wonder if he could outride me.

Austrian photographer Stefan Voitt approached me a few months ago and asked whether I would like to join him and fellow Austrian Trials rider Tom Oehler on a bike adventure whilst at the same time, incorporating a trip to visit a Wheels 4 Life project. They talked about their goal to return





home with a collection of photographs taken during our time in Guatemala, which they would exhibit and sell to raise funds for another Wheels 4 Life project.

We all met in Guatemala City where we rendezvoused with local tour operator, Matt, from "Oldtown Outfitters". He had suggested a unique and remote hut-to-hut tour in the Highlands at a high altitude of 10'000 feet. We had all brought full suspension mountain bikes, except Matt who was rocking his hardtail. During the first few days we were treated to some day rides around the picturesque and colonial cobblestoned city of Antigua which is surrounded by several active and by active, I mean spewing and fuming volcanoes. We also got to ride the first bike park in Guatemala - El Zur. After a 45 minutes bumpy truck shuttle we were offloaded half way up the Volcan de Agua to embrace a 20km downhill ride through lush cloud-forest and with a terrain of loose, dusty volcanic soil.

A few days later, after a 5 hours drive through the countryside, we arrived near Todos Santos at the base of the Cuchumantanes Mountain Range/Highlands. The goal was to ride all the way via Laguna Magdalena and Chortiz to the town of Acul Quiche in three days, sleeping in simple backpacker's huts and getting fed by local families. The trails, when we had one, and the terrain were rather technical and slow going. Often we had to push, hike and trials our way on the little used trails. Between scattered remote farms and wandering shepherds along the way, we were seldom alone but always far from civilisation. When we arrived at the small settlement of Laguna Magdalena the locals were surprised to see us come down the rough hillside on mountain bikes. The village was named after the beautiful lagoon and waterfall near the cabin where we were staying. As soon as the sun went down I put on every piece of clothing I had; with no electricity or fire, we were relying on the blankets provided in the huts. After a fun round of dice and a flask of local moonshine we crawled into our beds before 9pm. When we woke up, the stars were still visible in the dark sky and the ground was frozen; we didn't waste much time to begin our climb out of the freezing valley to reach the first rays of sun.

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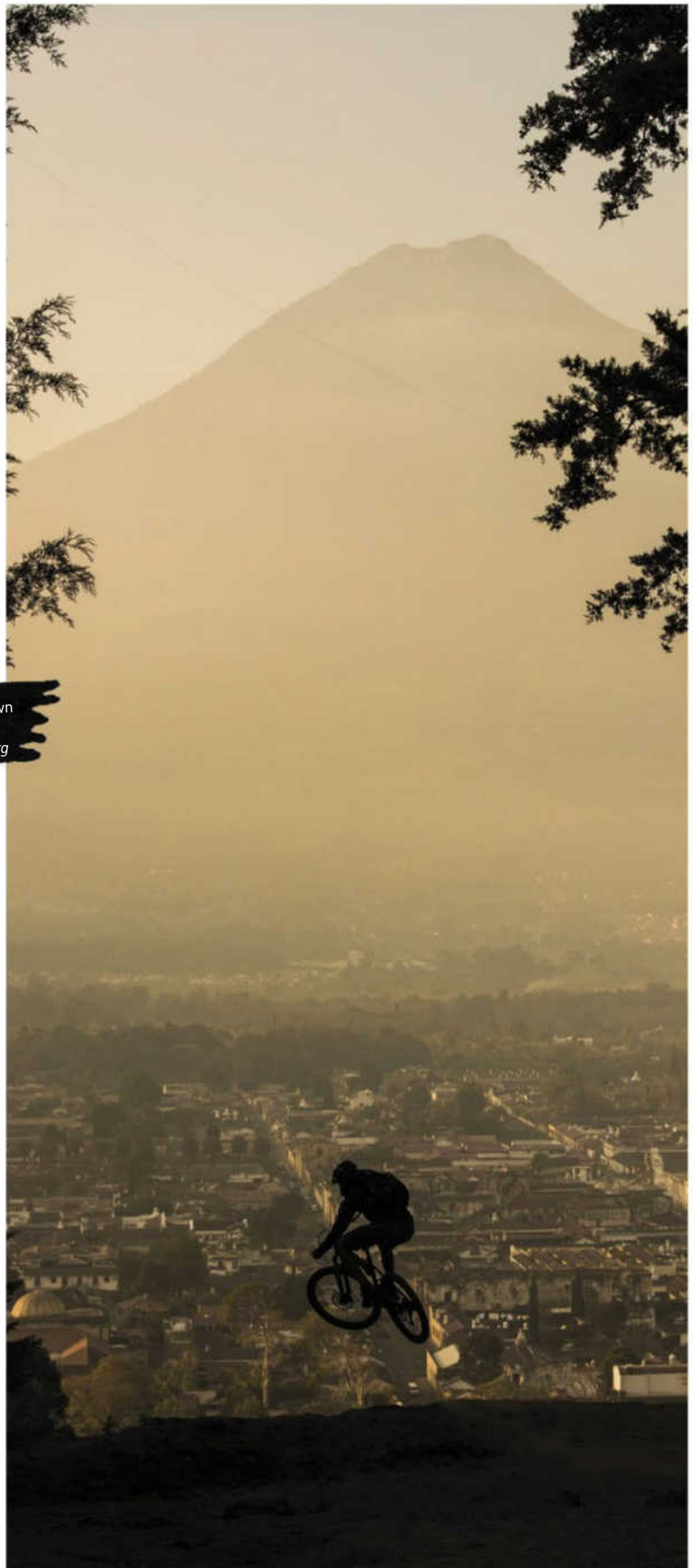


This was the big day, most of the route was never ridden on bicycles and there were several parts with no trail at all. We knew that the small village of Chortiz had another backpacker cabin, but in between we had to traverse several valleys and mountain ranges always at an altitude of around 3000m, where our highest point was actually at 3200m. Interestingly they still have trees growing at this altitude and luckily the air didn't seem as thin as in the Alps.

Between shooting photos, filming some GoPro footage and the slow going because of the

technical nature of the trail, we didn't arrive at our destination until right before sunset. Tom's trials skills transferred very well into his mountain biking style, with ease he would pick his line through the gnarliest rock gardens. At one point Matt suggested a potential short cut, which he was not sure about. This was not an area to get lost in, after following a tiny over grown trail for an hour and a half we came back to the main track. We figured we had saved about 30 minutes, but we still had another 2 hours to go with the sun already getting close to the horizon. When we arrived at the hut we found that two backpacking girls from the UK and their guide had already snatched up most of the beds in the cabin, we scattered some mattress and blankets on the floor and made ourselves at home. Showers were out of the question, and drinking water had to be filtered. A local family invited us into their primitive home with dirt floors and a fire pit in the middle of the room, where the women of the family were preparing a tasty smelling meal consisting of chicken broth, noodles, potatoes and eggs; the same would be served for breakfast the following morning.





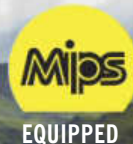
If you're interested in touring Guatemala, get in touch with Oldtown Outfitters: [adventureguatemala.com](http://adventureguatemala.com)  
More details on Hans Rey's Wheels 4 Life charity: [Wheels4Life.org](http://Wheels4Life.org)

After losing my crown as the undisputed 'Yahtzee' dice champion the night before, I was looking forward to the last leg of our trip, the long downhill to the Hacienda San Antonio, a working cheese farm. The trail reminded me of the old military switch back trails in the Italian Alps from WWII. We only encountered some shepherds and a few packhorses hauling supplies into the highlands. One of the horses was accidentally spooked by the rolling wheels and fell off the trail into the scrub. We had to help remove the heavy load from the horse so that it could get back on to the trail; luckily the horse was alright. Beautiful trails, natural terrain and a wild Guatemalan backcountry provided a great stage for our adventure.

Back in Antigua we were getting ready to visit the EFTC school (Education For The Children) and meet some of the previous Wheels 4 Life bike recipients, as well as the 31 new children that would receive a bike from us whilst we were there. Wheels 4 Life is a non-profit charity that provides bicycles to people in need of transportation in developing countries. EFTC is a school run by a UK based non-profit charity, their set-up was most impressive. Not only do they provide education to over 600 children, they also give access to their students to healthcare, nutrition, transportation (as with the bikes we donated) and where needed, psychological counselling and therapy for kids and families that have undergone traumatic experiences. Further educational support includes university scholarships to set these kids up for real jobs and a opportunity to break out of the vicious cycle of poverty. Many of these families live on less than \$1 per day and often 3 or 4 children share one small room and one big bed.

I was very chuffed to see Stefan and Tom supporting my cause and being inspired by seeing first hand the situation and hardship these kids are facing. I was also happy to see our project flourishing and succeeding after our initial phase 3 years ago, it was rewarding to see the bikes put to good use and still running. Some of the students are now attending university with dreams of administrative jobs or work in Guatemala's growing tourism industry.





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Photography: Harokz



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# High above the Coppermine

WORDS: MIKE BLEWITT PHOTOS: TIM BARDSLEY-SMITH

WE INTRODUCED OUR NEW ZEALAND 23 GREAT RIDES SERIES LAST ISSUE, WHEN WE TACKLED THE RIMUTAKA CYCLE TRAIL. THIS LONG DISTANCE TRAIL OUTSIDE WELLINGTON HAD A LITTLE MORE ADVENTURE THAN YOU MIGHT ANTICIPATE, BUT IS BY NO MEANS THE MOST ADVENTUROUS OF THE COLLECTION OF TRAILS THAT DOT NEW ZEALAND'S NORTH AND SOUTH ISLANDS.

The Dun Mountain/Coppermine Trail is a much shorter route, but certainly a lot more challenging. With its proximity to Nelson, it is one of the most accessible backcountry mountain biking routes in the whole of New Zealand. Of course, that doesn't mean it can be underestimated. Dun Mountain is quite prominent, and the route climbs almost 1000m, but of course, it descends back down again too, along newly built and upgraded singletrack that is mostly a New Zealand Grade 3 until Coppermine Saddle, then mostly Grade 4 on the way down.

## RIDING THE MOUNTAIN

The route is accessed from Nelson, which is one of the best places in New Zealand for a mountain bike holiday. Actually it's not bad for a paddling holiday, a hiking holiday, driving holiday... or a wine and beer tour too. Nelson really has a lot to offer, and it would be worth reading up on the area in our current travel issue.

The glory of Nelson for mountain biking is a combination of a few things. The climate is friendly, it's close to the beach for post ride swimming in summer, and it would be very hard to do all the trails in one trip, given the variety of trails spread over the region. There is enough riding here for at least three weeks, without repeating anything.

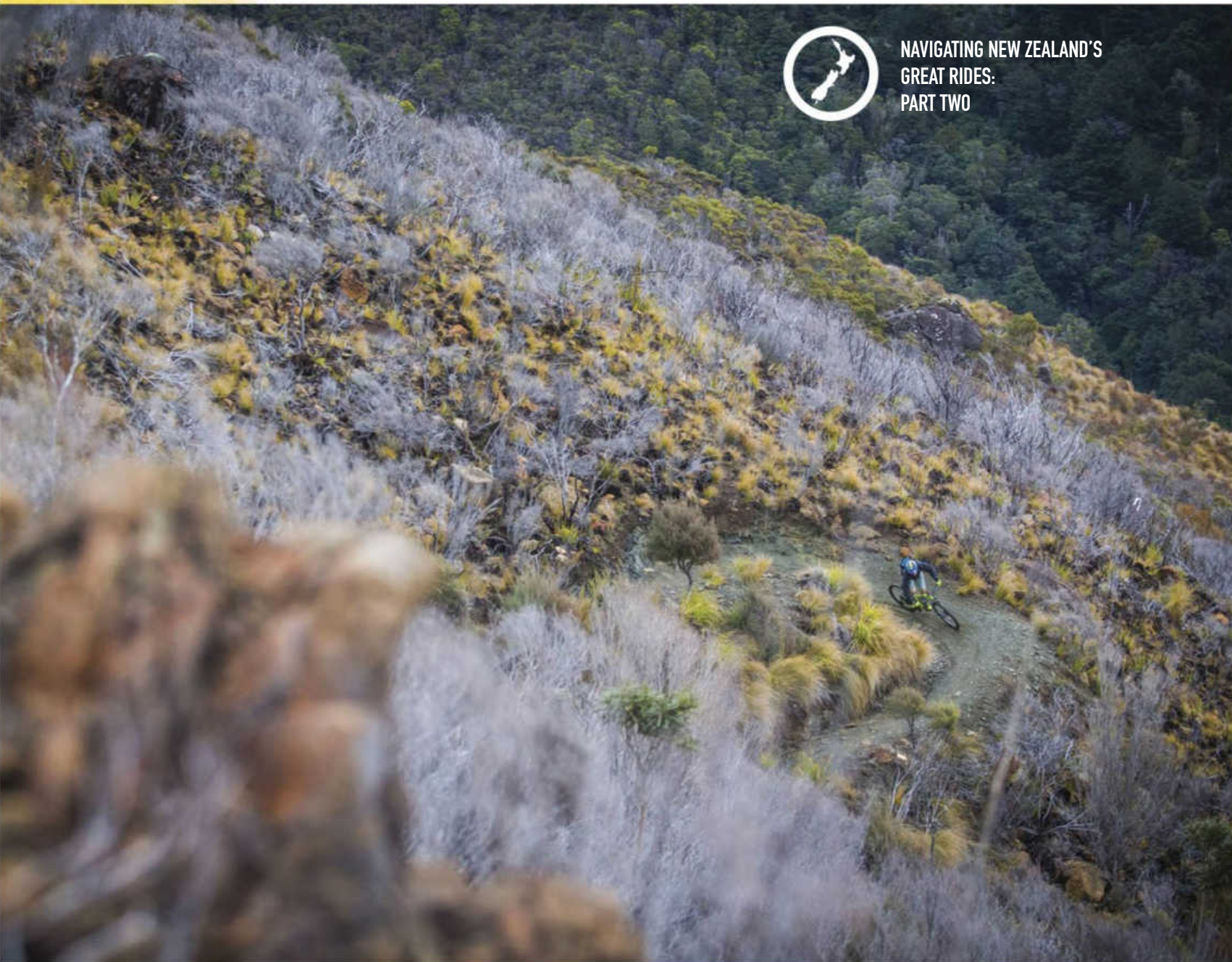
The Dun Mountain route actually runs up New Zealand's oldest railway line, which was used to mine Copper – would you believe – and Chromite. The route starts at Brooke Street, and passes through the Codger's Mountain Bike Park,







## NAVIGATING NEW ZEALAND'S GREAT RIDES: PART TWO



which is just one of many mountain bike parks in and around Nelson. It's a bit of a slog, and it's recommended to allow about 5 or 6 hours for the whole 38km route, although an ex-Australian mountain biker who's moved to Nelson claims he does it in about 2.5 hours.

Of course, we wanted to experience the finest parts of the trail... so when we got in touch with Steve from Helibike Nelson, he suggested we use a helicopter to get to Coppermine Saddle. Holidays are about experiencing new things, so none of us saw fit to argue. Not only would we get a helicopter ride over the New Zealand countryside, we'd get all the descending for none of the climbing. What's not to like?

### GET HIGH BY HELIBIKING

While we don't often get the chance to go helibiking at home in Australia, it's a growing business across the pond in New Zealand. With so many trails opened (and opening) for mountain bikers, lots of long day rides, and multi-day routes are becoming possible. Of course, not everyone is capable of the time off work, or all the hard work required for accessing backcountry trails.

So that's where someone like Steve, and helibiking, comes into play. While Steve runs plenty of guided trips and shuttle services without the use of helicopters, by working with Reid Helicopters he's able to put together some great trips for riders of any level from Nelson and around the globe.

Depending on how you feel about big machines, one of the coolest parts of the trip was arriving at Reid Helicopters in the Helibike Nelson shuttle. With three pristine helicopters on site, it really was a case of being surrounded by big kids' toys. The hanger had a floor to ceiling map of the greater Nelson/Tasman region, and a view over to the mountains that anyone would love to have in their backyard.

We met Toby, who is the owner and chief pilot at Reid Helicopters. With some inclement weather rolling in, we sat down for a coffee and Toby explained the sorts of trips that he does with Steve. The area they are in allows them access to drop riders off for the Heaphy Track, the Old Ghost Road, and plenty of other locations that might take too much time to get in and out of otherwise. They also do a whole range of trips for hiking, scenery and fishing – but we mostly talked about bikes. We were also really happy to see the racks Toby had fitted to the Squirrel, which held the bikes much like many car roof rack systems – way better than having them in a cage below the chopper, or dangling on a rope. Having them certified by the aviation authority was painfully expensive, but no ones bike







gets damaged, and everyone has a better experience. Along with our safety briefing, and Steve making sure we knew what to expect in the mountains and on the trails, it was evident that they want to make sure everyone has a great time, and that bike and rider get there, and back, safely.

The clouds cleared and we had the line of sight we needed for flying. Our bikes were already loaded and we piled into the helicopter. Taking off and pulling away from the ground with your bike secured right next to you (albeit outside) does get the heart started. We flew across the nearby farms and approached the forested slopes of the Mount Richmond Forest Park mountain ranges, with Steve and Dave from Biking Nelson pointing out peaks and routes that just looked like a series of mountains to us. It was obvious we were heading into the hills with people who knew them well.

We approached the Coppermine Saddle and were given some pretty strict instructions, mostly based around how to not get injured (or killed) by the rotors. We landed, scrambled clear of the helicopter and Toby and our guides unloaded our bikes.

We watched as Toby flew off into the clouds that had risen up around us again. After the cacophony of the helicopter, the comparative silence was deafening.

## SLIDING OFF THE SADDLE

While the 23 Great Rides initiative has meant there's been extra investment in this trail – it is by no means new. From the saddle, the South Branch trail used to descend on some very rugged singletrack. Our guides Steve and Dave point out the old trail as we get ready for the descent. It's narrow, overgrown, and just about everything you would expect a pretty wild trail to be.

What's here now is by no means tame. It's quite steep in places, rocky, rough, and it's an easy place to pick up a lot of speed that you might not know what to do with. Given the rainfall in the mountains, much of the trail is domed for runoff, with natural gutters built to the side. These are excellent for water management, but in some areas they are a hazard if you get a bit sideways.

With about 10km of descending in front of us, we pull on our jackets as some drizzle sets in. One by one we stream onto the singletrack, tracing through the turns at the top of the pass like a short snake in some reasonably bright clothing.

The trail is really open up the top of the pass, but soon enough we drop lower and get some shelter from the rising wind. The







trail negotiates the rocky terrain really well, but not without keeping some features on the trail to add some fun. Matt boosts off some rocks and Tim manages to pick up speed insanely quickly as we accelerate down the hill.

We keep descending, further into the forest, past low shrubs and then small trees, and down some long sustained sections that drop us into the lush green valley below. The terrain keeps you really focused, as with the continual drop you easily pick up speed, and the rock is sharp, hard and unforgiving. We were all on trail bikes with strong tyres, but still had one sidewall tear in our group. An experienced rider could bring a hardtail on this route, but a trail bike with strong tyres and good brakes would be the best tool for the job.

In less than 20 minutes we had descended from an open saddle with nothing to hide behind, to scrappy subalpine foliage, low growth bush, and now lush forest.

The terrain continued to change, and the trail follows a line above the stream down the valley, continually dropping height, and sometimes



moving to elevated boardwalks to avoid wet areas. As the trail flattens we pick up more speed, given the benefit of improved line of sight and a little more room to move, as each of us tries to edge past the other, racing for the best line amongst the tree ferns.

We end up coming to a service road, where riders have the option to ride back up and over a different pass to return to the start of the trail before the climb. With the van waiting for us at the base, we instead get back to the singletrack that has formed on an old service trail for the dam, until we're held up by a duck.

Yes, a duck.

For some reason, Steve has managed to befriend this duck, and she's chosen him as a mate. So while Steve is able to pat the duck as she's flown across the valley to say hi, she's also pretty keen on keeping us away from him.

We carry on down the valley, and while the route would drop us right back in town, Steve has another of his shuttles and trailers parked off the road, and we pull up, still buzzing from the long descent, talking about close calls on fast corners, some near misses, and other trails that we shot past that will have to be left for 'next time'.

What really stood out was how the helicopter access added to the experience. We got taken right to the heart of the action – and while I'm not afraid of a long climb, or some hard work to earn a great riding experience, I can see why helibiking is so popular, due to the ability to almost teleport you to the top of a wild descent, without a chair lift or shuttle road required. You get to enjoy the part of the ride you look forward to the most, in a fresh, relaxed state – without fatigue.





## OTHER GREAT RIDES

You're more likely to be struggling to choose which ride to do, than wondering where to go when you're in Nelson. The Rameka Track is a great ride, although you're best to get a lift to the start. You could also travel further west for the multi-day Old Ghost Road, which is being finalised this summer.

## EATING AND DRINKING

The Sprig and Fern offers some great local beers, and there's plenty of options on the main street of Nelson. But for meals, it's hard to go past East St Vegetarian Cafe for great food and exquisite service. They have just moved to 8 Church Lane.

## GETTING THERE

Nelson airport is connected to other New Zealand cities, but chances are you'll fly via Christchurch or Auckland if you come over from Australia. If you're driving there, believe the suggested driving times, they're not fast open roads over the mountains.

## FIND IT, RIDE IT, THE FIRST TIME

Getting a guide when riding in new places can really help you get your head around where the trails are, what the ratings mean, and what you need to be aware of in the local area. It also means you can think a bit less about where you're going, and just focus on the riding. We were guided by Helibike Nelson and Nelson Biking, both were very helpful during our stay.

*[Helibikenelson.co.nz](http://Helibikenelson.co.nz) or [bikingNelson.co.nz](http://bikingNelson.co.nz)*

## WHEN TO GO

We rode in the middle of August, and it was fine. But the best times to go would be October to December or February to April, to avoid both winter and the crowds in summer. But Nelson is a year round riding destination.

## WHAT'S ON

There's an event that runs over Coppermine in February, and on 20th February 2016 it's on again. There are two courses, and both involve the trail. However the Epic course adds a natural singletrack descent down Black Diamond Ridge. So if you could be in Nelson around this time, you'd be crazy to miss taking part in this backcountry event.

*[coppermine.co.nz](http://coppermine.co.nz)*



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**BREEZER** 



# RIDING IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS

WORDS: MIKE BLEWITT IMAGES: MIKE BLEWITT, IMOGEN SMITH

Switzerland is known for chocolate, efficiency, banking and mountains – and in Australia it actually doesn't quite have the reputation for mountain biking that it should. While we will often dream of a trip to Canada, the USA, New Zealand or the French Alps to get our mountain bike kicks – I can think of plenty of reasons, in-fact kilometres of reasons, why Switzerland should be considered for your dream mountain bike adventure as well.

## THE ANGEL MOUNTAIN

Despite sitting almost in the middle of Switzerland, Engelberg is actually one of the country's easiest ski resorts to access. Placed within the Obwalden canton, Engelberg is less than 45 minutes by train from Luzern, and only a little longer from Zurich Airport train station. This makes it an easy choice for travelling Australian mountain bikers – even more so because there are so many other activities around.

The village of Engelberg isn't overly high at about 1000m, but it is dwarfed by Mt Titlis, which rises impressively to 3238m. Mountains rise sharply almost all around you, but Mt Titlis garners the most attention, with its steep off-

piste ski slope rising sharply, serviced by express telecabines. While the resort town still has a long winter ski season, from October until May, the lift and hotel infrastructure is open throughout summer and draws many tourists thanks to the high-mountain restaurants and activities. Engelberg has been famous for many reasons through history – from its Benedictine Monastery, to the high alpine pastures

around Truebsee, the mineral waters, great cheese, skiing, walking, clean air – more recently, it's becoming well-known for mountain biking.

## TURNING THE THIN RED LINE TO INTO SINGELTRACK

The Swiss love to be outdoors, it's part of the national psyche to be in the forests, up in the mountains or enjoying the lakes. The Swiss Alps are serviced by amazing infrastructure to allow unprecedented access to the high and beautiful places around the country. It sounds condescending, but the whole country is like a giant train set, with seemingly impossible cable cars ascending vertiginous peaks, while trains go through tunnels and cross via ducts. But this compact mountain wonderland is a reality.











Switzerland has a very open position on mountain bike access. Every walking track is open to mountain bikes, unless there is a sign on the trail forbidding it. That means, you can look at any trail map, with a spiderweb of red lines stretched over it, and be looking at almost limitless possibilities for mountain biking. Behind the postcard perfect mountains, the clear skies, green fields and blue lakes – Switzerland offers more levels of perfection. Those views are possible in quite a few regions around the European Alps, but the difference is the actual mountain biking. Beautiful mountains aren't always matched by amazing trails – but they always seem to be in Switzerland.

Before arriving in Engelberg, we had a few routes picked out, thanks to route descriptions and maps that are on the Engelberg homepage. But with such a high number of options it was hard to choose what would be the best choice, and what would be in good condition. We got in touch with Prime Bike School, who have some local guides and a huge amount of experience. They run skills sessions as well, but they were happy to talk about the region and make some suggestions.

Prime produce their own map, and it shows some suggested hiking and mountain biking routes, and is by no means exhaustive. If you want to get out and explore, invest in some maps from singletracks.com before you go. They mark the best bike routes and have them well graded. But be aware that black really is black.

There had been some late summer snow, so Dani at Prime made a suggestion to look at the Brunnihutte route, as it is mostly on a south facing slope, and has great views to Mt Titlis – plus the Brunnihutte serves some pretty tasty food.

We met up with our guide Dario and took a telecabine to 1500 metres, and rode up the narrow sealed and gravel double-track for the last few hundred metres of ascent. The climb was mostly gradual with a few steep pinches as we snaked through farms and traversed forested slopes. The clatter of cow bells was ever present, mixed with the tapping of hikers walking poles. Farmers waved, hikers greeted us as we did them. On a sunny day in late summer, everyone was happy to be in the mountains.



## RIDING IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS



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## RIDING IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS

As we snaked around the slope, we had an immense view down to Engelberg, and could see straight across to Mt Titlis, where the fresh snow stood out in brilliant white.

We approached the Brunnihutte with paragliders launching off the steep slopes below us, and people unloading from the smaller lift that comes all the way to this point. Hikers, mountain bikers, mountain runners, and families young and old congregated at the hut and around the lake and pasture nearby. It's not difficult to get to the Brunnihutte, and the terrace offers unobstructed views across the valley – and great food! After roesti, strudel and coffee we were fortified for the singletrack traverse behind the hut.

Much of Switzerland is farmed, and the rolling singletrack traverse moves through some cow country. Despite a slightly uphill start, the line of trail slithering over the hills in front of us made it easy to push hard up the small inclines. We continued to pass small farm buildings, or 'alps' where families bring their cows to the high pastures in summer.

Soon enough we move away from fields and into forest, coming into steeper hair pins, and fast trails crossing scree slopes. The forest is dark and we need to pay close attention to rocks, but everything is manageable to ride blind, as long as you get back far enough.

Almost in an instant we pop out of the forest after one long rocky chute, onto a high mountain service road, and stop to let our heart rates drop, each of us interrupting the other with stories of near misses and exhilaration from the last descent.

### BEYOND THE HORIZON

Dario leads us down the road through some more farms, and soon enough we're back onto trails in the lower forests, before finishing up in town. The whole ride, Dario had stopped to show us other options, putting real destinations against the lines we had seen on the map.

Many of the trails in Engelberg, and in Switzerland, aren't purpose-built for mountain biking. And while plenty of 'flow' trails are being built in different areas like Verbier, Zermatt, Lenzerheide and Corviglia, so much of the adventure of riding in Switzerland is making your way through the mountains on trails that people have used for decades – or centuries.

"Sometimes, you have to walk," says Dario. "But to access the best trails, and the best descents, I think many Swiss bikers understand that."

The terrain is rugged, and accessing the best rides does involve some hard





work. Our ride on the Brunnihutte route was completely rideable, unless you messed up a tight switchback or chose the wrong gear on a pinch climb. Dario was quick to suggest two other brilliant routes in the area.

#### THE SURENENPASS

This is a big route, but quite unlike anything we can do at home. At about 80km, the route also has 1860m of climbing. It's not easy. The trail starts from Engelberg and climbs through the valley, taking the Äbnet cablecar can save some climbing, as the next stretches have difficult sections before arriving at the Blackenalp. The pass is a little further on, and at about 2300m is quite high. The descent is far from easy, but it is long, winding down towards the Urnersee, where you can take a paddle wheeler ferry and then a train to get back to Engelberg.

#### FOUR LAKES TRAIL

Like the Surenenpass, the fresh snow meant we weren't quite able to do this route. It also goes close to 2300m, and the trail connects four of the popular lakes below Mt Titlis. The suggested route starts in Engelberg before climbing to Truebsee, the beautiful lake that is held above the town. The difficult climb to the Jochpass is then rewarded with a long descent to

the Engstlensee. Passing through more 'alps' the trail skirts the 3<sup>rd</sup> lake – Tannensee, before reaching Melchsee and the long descent to the town of Stans to catch the train back to Engelberg. Of course, there are lots of trails up high and you might well choose a different route down.

### IN AND AROUND ENGELBERG

The beauty of Engelberg isn't just about the mountains that loom above – it's also about its proximity to so many other attractions. Within the resort town, there are options for hiking, paragliding, climbing the via ferrata routes, visiting cultural attractions – and of course just relaxing! Our focus was mountain biking, but with Luzern just 45 minutes away there are lots of other options that are possible as a day trip, making Engelberg a brilliant base for a family holiday. You don't need to sacrifice the mountain biking to keep everyone in the family happy. Engelberg offers a lot for the travelling mountain biker, but not at the expense of other travel experiences.

More details can be found at [engelberg.ch](http://engelberg.ch) or *over the page*



# RIDING IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS

## ESSENTIAL ENGLEBERG DETAILS

### TRANSPORT

The real beauty of travelling in Switzerland compared to other areas is the ease of transport. We travelled only by rail, and had no problems with our bike bags and luggage, or with our bikes on day trips. Some routes might require booking a ticket for your bike, but station staff will be able to guide you on that. We used a Swiss Travel Pass, which meant we were able to use the trains and most Swiss transport as required within our trip. If you're likely to be moving around a lot, this is a really good investment, as single tickets can otherwise add up quite quickly. The Travel Pass will also reduce the cost of mountain trains and lifts.

[myswitzerland.com/rail](http://myswitzerland.com/rail)

### HUT TO HUT

The Swiss Alpine Club maintain a series of mountain huts through the Alps. These are a world apart from the old stockmen's huts in the Australian High Country. They are essentially mountain hotels with beds and restaurants – and even wifi. The Brunnihutte sits high above Engelberg, and makes for a great lunch stop on a ride. But there are 12 huts (of 152) that are recommended for mountain bike trips, with the Maigelshutte and Cabane du Mont Fort having some of the best mountain biking nearby – not to mention amazing views. Head to their website for more details and route suggestions.

[sac-cas.ch/huts/bike](http://sac-cas.ch/huts/bike)

### WHERE TO STAY

The Titlis Resort has recently opened, with a whole range of self-catering apartments in one complex linked by communal courtyards. It's a prime example of modern Swiss design, with modern materials and facilities built in a style that is sympathetic to the heritage of the region – and the environment. There's a huge carpark buried below the ground, with a secure bike storage room as well. Apartments have laundry facilities and wifi, and there's a spa and wellness centre in the resort.

Best of all, you can arrange to have fresh bread and produce delivered each morning, local

mineral water is on tap, and the train station and ski lift are both a very short walk, or ride, away.

[titlisresort.ch](http://titlisresort.ch)

### WELCOME TO WELLNESS

One of the most striking things you'll notice when staying in a hotel in Switzerland, or most alpine areas, is the wellness centre. What does 'wellness' mean anyway? They offer spa treatments as well, but not of the heavy chlorine, bubbly water variety. A wellness centre will often have a steam room, a sauna, some cool showers (possibly aromatic), a massage area for your 'spa' treatments, and perhaps a pool, thermal pools and more.

Just about every wellness centre is mostly a 'nude zone' which can taking a bit of adaption for most Australians. But using the facilities of your hotel really helps you relax and unwind after a day in the mountains, and seems to guarantee a great night's rest too. Plus, it's the perfect excuse to use the robe and slippers in your hotel room.



### YOU MUST TRY OUR CHEESE

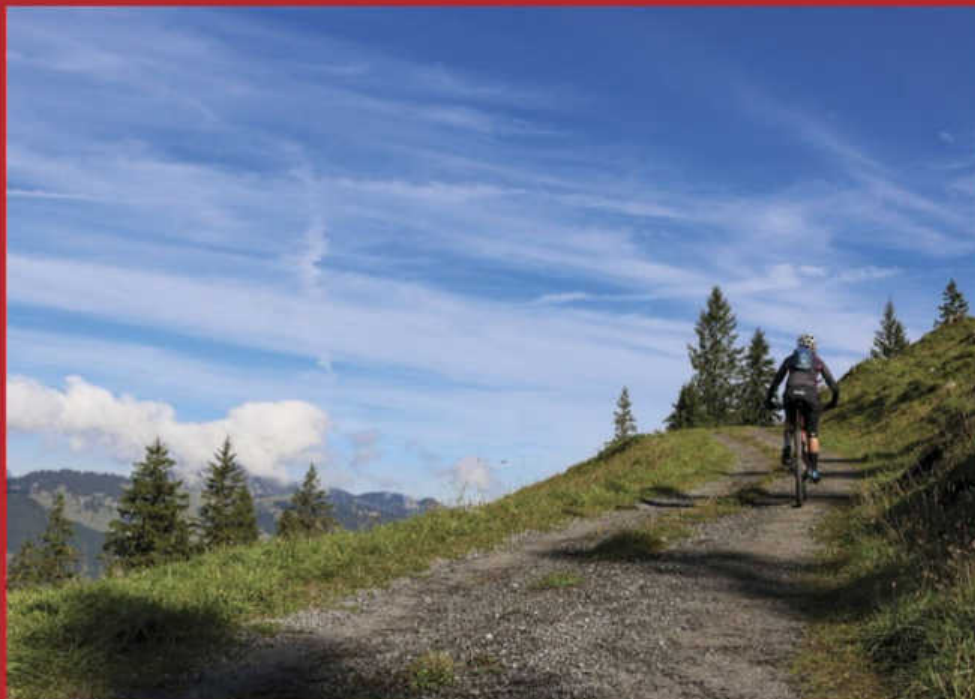
You could be forgiven for thinking that every valley in Switzerland has its own cheese. Sometimes it doesn't seem to far off that. Central Switzerland is at the centre of cheese making so Engelberg is no different. Although there is a showchees factory right in the monastery in town, we ventured higher up the mountain. We dropped into the to see Sälmi Töngi at Alpkäserei Gerschnialp, where he has been making cheese in summer since 1975. The cheese is stored in cellars until it's the right age for market. The Sbrinz is a speciality from the region, and only made in select locations in the valley.

We tried some of the cheese on site and loved the creamy but sharp taste. We bought some back in the valley, from the local supermarket, and enjoyed it with our dinners for the rest of the week.

### SKY HIGH IN THE MOUNTAINS

While it's more than fair to come to Engelberg to go mountain biking, and aim to ride as much as possible – it would be foolish to not head up to the top of Mount Titlis. Not only is there a restaurant with views across to the Monch, Jungfrau and Eiger, but there's an ice tunnel and the new Skybridge, which spans a huge chasm of snow, ice and rock. It's an immersive experience, and a truly stunning way to gain an idea for the size of the mountains. But no matter what the temperature is in the valley, don't forget to take plenty of warm clothes up, and your sunscreen.

[titlis.ch](http://titlis.ch)





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# ESCAPING IN THE BACKCOUNTRY OF FALLS CREEK

WORDS AND PHOTOS: MANDY LAMONT

There's nothing quite like the adventure of a backcountry trip, getting off the beaten track and exploring. Going beyond the marked trails and seeing what is on the other side, and rarely seeing another soul on your journey. It's the unknown, the fact that no one else is around, and finding your own way. You're out there with the elements and those unknown elements become part of the adventure.

I love exploring the backcountry and I spent a couple days exploring the Falls Creek backcountry last summer with Shannon Rademaker of All Terrain Cycles Mansfield and guide Andrew.

For Shannon, backcountry operator and guide, one of the biggest things about being an operator in the backcountry is having a really good trip plan, understanding the risks involved and how to manage those risks. Weather checks, communication checks and equipment checks are key.

Being on unmarked backcountry trails or trails that haven't been purposely built for mountain biking are unpredictable. Quite often some of these trails won't see people for a long time, so there can be branches and rocks across the track. There's no bike patrol or maintenance like in a bike park situation and no safety network of trails, where there's a loop back to base. In the back country it's generally point to point, so you need to be prepared for almost anything and carry everything you might need with you.









Planning the trip is important and part of the excitement of the adventure. Looking at the map and deciding where you're going to go. Anticipating the adventure, what's going to happen, do you have everything you need, do you need to be fit for this? Also knowing your own and other riders abilities. Then once you're out there riding, you can enjoy the experience. Being in the moment, just you and a couple of mates. There's a sense of achievement by getting to your destination. It's a highlight because you've just had this amazing experience.



The ski resort of Falls Creek in the Alpine National Park is a great base to explore the backcountry. Falls are at the tail end of a four stage mountain bike plan built by World Trail. With the first trails opening in 2013 Falls Creek has since been developing as a mountain biking destination. Stage three trails open on the 21st November 2015, providing a total of 22.3km of singletrack on the resort this summer, and the fourth and final stage is set to open late 2016 giving Falls Creek a total of 40km of purpose built mountain bike trails upon completion.

As a mountain bike destination, Falls Creek certainly is a place where you want to spend a few days exploring the singletrack and aqueduct trails that the resort has to offer. There are beginner cross country trails, flat aqueduct trails as well as intermediate downhill and all-mountain trails.

As well as the purpose built trails on the resort, the Falls Creek backcountry is expansive. Part of the Victorian Alps of the Great Dividing Range, it offers both short and long distance cross country trials in the high country for the more adventurous with mountain climbs, the Bogong High Plains, cattleman's huts, valleys and rivers.

Just a few kilometres behind the resort towards Omeo along the Bogong High Plains Road, there are a few trails to get your legs warmed up and get your eyes used to the view. Parking at Watchbed Creek we rode the Marum Point Paralyser (10km loop), and the historic huts trail (11km). A great introduction to the backcountry on relatively flat and wide 4WD trail and of course stunning views. They can be done separately or joined together and can loop back to the car park along the Bogong High Plains road.

The historic huts trail goes past Wallaces Hut and Cope Hut. These huts are an important part of Victoria's alpine country, and an easy pedal.

The oldest hut in the Alpine National Park, Wallace hut was built in 1889 amongst the twisted snow gums by brothers Arthur, William and Stewart Wallace while they were up in the Bogong High Plains with their cattle. It's one of the few huts to survive the 1939 bush fires. A great place to stop for lunch, you can't stay in the hut overnight though.

Cope Hut was built in 1929 by the ski club of Victoria as a ski refuge. Eco-friendly camping platforms have recently been installed at Cope Hut which can be booked through Parks Victoria and cost \$30 per night.

As well as the short distance backcountry trails around Falls, there are also a lot of long distance, point to point trails. The next day we rode Timms Spur, 30+ km's down to Mount Beauty. At the base of Mt Bogong and Falls Creek, built in 1949, the town was developed by the State Electricity Commission



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RIDER: Kelly McGarry

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to provide additional accommodation for the thousands of workers during the construction of the Kiewa Hydro Electric Scheme. There are many tracks through the valley that were built to assist the Hydro works around the area, some of these rough and raw 4WD trails we will ride.

After coffee and cookies from Milch we're on our way. We have perfect autumn weather. Blue skies, little wind and ideal temperatures in mid March. Leaving the resort we're dropped off on the Bogong High Plains Road at the trail head of the Marum Point Paralyser. Heading off into the unknown through the dead snowgums, it's not long before we're above the tree line and riding through the bare mountain tops of the Bogong High Plains on the 4WD Big River fire trail. The sparse Bogong High Plains are dotted with alpine flowers and you can see the trail for miles ahead winding around the bare mountain in front, so you have a pretty good idea of what is ahead of you. You can see the resort of Falls Creek, a spec in the distance. Reaching the Mt Nelse turnoff and the views stretch for miles, the vegetation has changed to a more dense low lying shrub. It's amazing being on top of the peaks in the Great Dividing Range. All you can see is layers of mountains all the way to New South Wales, including Mt Bogong, Victoria's highest mountain. We start the climb over Spion Kopje spur and along Timm's Spur, where we are rewarded with magnificent views of Mt Bogong.

As we begin our long descent into the valley, the views have us all gob smacked, panoramas everywhere you look and we keep stopping for photos. We are dwarfed in this majestic mountainous landscape. The distant mountains covered in dead snowgums looks like a grey three day growth.

We're now descending and the vegetation changes again, we're back in the gums and the trees are green and dense; a typical Aussie bush landscape. The scenery is going past a lot quicker than on the way up. The only problem is that on such a rough trail, you really need to be looking at where you're going, and not just admiring the scenery. It's rocky and overgrown with shrubs and the occasional log across the trail as we descend into the Kiewa Valley.

After what seems like an eternal descent, we reach a small river crossing, the East Kiewa River, which we are able to cross without getting our feet wet. What goes down must go up, and







we start a small climb afterwards, this is pretty much the only ascent on the descent.

Further into the descent and the vegetation changes again into what is almost rain forest, with lush ferns. Continuing down into Mount Beauty, it's getting warmer the lower we go and the boys are having fun with the loose dry corners.

One final cross of the river upon reaching Mount Beauty, which seemed like a buzzing metropolis after what we had just experienced, we had a fun little spin on the BMX track before a well deserved locally brewed ale at Sweetwater Brewery to talk about our adventures. It's taken us most of the day and what a day. We've covered over 30 kms and around 1,500 vertical metres including plenty of time to take in those jaw dropping views.

Shannon, owner of All Terrain Cycles in Mansfield and Gravity Oz bike skills clinics with school and private groups has had a lot of experience on bikes, he grew up racing BMX, then discovered mountain bikes in his teens and downhill racing. A qualified mountain bike guide and outdoor educator, he is now also a lecturer at TAFE for the outdoor ed courses, giving skill development, coaching and assistance. For Shannon, the unknown experience is the best part of the back country. It's not just given to you on a plate. "I like to go places where not many people have been before, I guess that's the beauty of it too. It's a pretty raw experience and not many people get to experience it, so I guess that's the good feeling factor too. There's only a select number of people who have done it. Whether you've been there before or not, the beauty of knowing that you're out there and you never see anyone, it's a good feeling. Just having those wow moments, it's easy to get side tracked by the vista and just enjoy the moment too much. I love it."

## EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

To be prepared in the backcountry, you should carry with you a first aid kit, charged phone, spare tube, tube repair kit and a pump, a map and compass that you know how to read, energy snacks, spare links and a chain tool, tyre levers, plenty of water and let someone know where you're going. Communication is a big thing in the backcountry.

The resort in the Victorian High Country is a great base, with the resort facilities open year round. It's easy to explore the back country and you don't have to travel far to get back to the comfort of your accommodation, a good feed and a cold beer. Being an alpine climate it is around 10 degrees lower than the towns in the valleys, and it's not uncommon to see inclement weather in the summer months, so check the forecast and be prepared, conditions can change very quickly.

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# AT HOME WITH CANYON

WORDS AND PHOTOS: MIKE BLEWITT

**AS YOU READ THIS, CANYON – THE PRECISION GERMAN BICYCLE MANUFACTURER – WILL HAVE SET UP IN MELBOURNE READY TO SERVE AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND. MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER EUROPEAN BIKE BRAND, CANYON ARE A DIRECT TO CONSUMER BIKE MANUFACTURER, WHO AIM TO GET RIDERS ON THE BEST BIKE POSSIBLE FOR THEIR HARD EARNED DOLLARS.**

Direct to consumer means just that – you don't go to a bike shop to talk to the staff, and test a variety of bikes that they source from importers. Instead, you choose your bike online, and pay for it to be delivered to your door. This means there's no need to be paying for the mark up of the importer, or the bike shop. You pay the manufacturer directly for the bike, and they send it to you.

This concept has been working very successfully in Europe, where Canyon

have experienced immense growth. I visited Canyon.Home in Koblenz, Germany, to gain a greater understanding of the brand, their bikes, and how their business will work for Australian mountain bikers.

## THE EARLY YEARS

Part of getting to know the brand is getting to know the history, and talking to Canyon's Brand Officer Frank Aldorf explained a lot. While Canyon as we now see it is quite young, the beginning started with owner Roman Arnold, who was road racing in Germany and beyond.

"He was racing German races on the road, and he always had to travel with his Dad in his teenage years," explains Frank. "His Dad thought it was too boring to just sit there and wait for his son to finish with the race. So they started importing and selling goods from Italy to the other racers."





This meant there was a trailer to sell out of, then a mobile shop, and then a regular bike shop handling different brands.

“Roman always had this idea that he wanted his own brand, with his own idea of what the best bike would look like. He wanted to offer the best bike, the best experience. There’s always a better version of something, and he thought there was a better way of making bikes. German engineering is well-known in the world, so there might be something a German brand can offer.”

## AT HOME WITH CANYON

Fast forward to late 2015, and we are sitting outside the Canyon.Home building, talking over coffees in the warm autumn sun. At one end of the carpark there’s a pumptrack, that gets used for their invitational events. There’s a large showroom at the front of the building, displaying bikes from some of their champion riders, like Fabian Barel and Alban Lakata – plus the original trailer that used to sell imported parts to German bike racers. The cafe has homemade cakes, fresh salads and excellent coffee.

The building itself is a behemoth of concrete and glass, with angular shapes and horizontal lines, a wonder of modern architecture that stands apart from the traditional architecture in the town of Koblenz.

At the end of the building, countless Canyon customers are test riding bikes in the carpark, each attended by a courteous Canyon staff member. Inside, each bike model is on display, with more Canyon staff sizing up customers, explaining subtle differences in the bikes, or bringing a different model out for a test ride from the door from the workshop.

Behind the workshop door, it’s a hive of activity. Every model and size is stored for a test ride, and countless Canyon mechanics are building bikes for customer pick ups, or servicing bikes that have been dropped off or sent in. There must be over 30 work stations, and each mechanic is hard at work. There’s a barricaded area where prototypes are worked on – but that was strictly off-limits on my visit.

All this is at complete odds with what you would expect from what you might simply call a mail order brand. Many would suspect there would be no attention to detail, test riding, or such high levels of customer service. This clearly isn’t the case. It’s taken a little while, but riders really recognise that Canyon offer an exceptional product.

“Since we had our own product line, we have been able to compete in professional sport, in bike reviews and in design competitions, we were proving in all these different areas that our product is at the top of the line. People have figured there is something special about the Canyon product. With the direct model that we offer, they also see the benefit of getting this fantastic product at a lower price.”

## GERMAN EFFICIENCIES

Canyon’s presence extends further out of Koblenz, to their newly extended factory in Ruebenach. The building is a crouching giant on the horizon as you approach, rising out of the fields around it. While the production line isn’t fully automated, the stock management is.







The loading bays receive all the parts, and send out boxed bikes to customers around the world. Four or five containers are delivered each day. It's in-between that is interesting. Parts come in, get sorted, scanned, and are stored in a matrix storage so the exact parts for each build can be selected without wasting time.

Canyon have 18 assembly stations where the bikes are built from the frame up. The painted frame of the bike moves around the line, and each mechanic has 60 seconds to complete their task on the bike before it's finished. Then they are test ridden on a short circuit inside. This last step is completely separate, with the mechanic tuning the bike, to make sure it is ready to ride, with every bolt tightened to the correct torque, and recorded digitally for quality control. The bike is then boxed methodically with just the front wheel, handlebars, pedals and seat removed. There's a box inside the bike box that contains full instructions on how to fit these parts, plus a shock pump, torque wrench, carbon paste and anything that is essential for the bike. It's imperative for Canyon that you really can be ready to ride once your bike arrives.

The boxes are labeled and stored or sent to the dock for shipping. The facility can store 14 000 bikes, and build kits for 28 000 bikes. Running two shifts in peak times, the factory can turn out about 350 bikes a day.

It's a very efficient process, and while this one factory builds all Canyon bikes, it's easy to see that such a production line could be reproduced elsewhere in the world as Canyon spread to more countries, thereby increasing efficiencies and increasing production.

## QUALITY CONTROL

While Canyon have their frames and forks manufactured off-shore – their testing is probably the most stringent in the industry. Canyon were the first brand to invest in their own CT scanner, and they now have 5 test labs. Two are in Germany, and three are in Asia. Every single Canyon carbon handlebar and fork that gets used on a Canyon bike is scanned in a CT scanner for faults or weaknesses. Results are recorded in case there are problems later in the product's life.

While they don't scan every frame, they do a random selection from each production run. Canyon are so precise with their standards, that some of their suppliers in Asia have purchased their own CT scanners, to make sure their own quality control is up to scratch.

Canyon also run their own test lab, running frames and components (of their own and from their competitors) through fatigue and strength tests well beyond the required standards. Their attention to detail is second to none, and it's clear







that Canyon aren't a mail order company – they are a modern and progressive bike company that sell via a different model, and that means we can get the bikes we want at a great price.

## AN AUSTRALIAN FLAVOUR

For now, Canyon will be looking to start slowly in Australia. They have a large facility for customer service calls and technical service setup in Melbourne. We won't be receiving their full product line in Australia, but bikes that suit our riding and terrain are being introduced first.

The big question for many, is where do I get my bike serviced? Canyon's model is different to that of other big players, but the reality is any shop can service a Canyon. The increase of service only shops in Australia reflects our habits of buying online. So it is best to see this platform as a different option, where you order direct and build a good relationship with a local mechanic or shop. Canyon do have tech support in Melbourne, and that will be essential for proprietary technology like the Shape Shifter system.

Given the experience in Germany in using this model, and the time taken to get the setup right in Australia, I expect it to be popular, and an excellent option for riders looking for a unique bike with precision engineering at an excellent price. Retail prices should be released as you read this, but I think it's fair to say that the future is bright for Canyon in Australia.



# BORN IN THE EWS

## THE STRIVE CF

Here in Australia, Canyon held a bike preview in Victoria which was also attended by Fabian Barel. Not just a team rider, Barel has been instrumental in the design of the Canyon Strive CF, Canyon's 160mm travel all-mountain bike. His engineering background, and racing experience makes him the perfect tool for building a refined bike to tackle the Enduro World Series.

The Strive frame is long and stable, and by using the CT scanner they have manipulated the carbon layup to maximise the stiffness and strength, and minimise the weight. Tube shapes have been tuned for standover clearance, clearance for a full bottle, and no-fuss internal routing, with all hoses or cables having their own carbon sleeve inside the frame.

The real focus is almost hidden – the Shape Shifter is a small gas spring that is hidden behind the alloy rocker. Actuated from a lever on the handlebar, the Shape Shifter allows you to switch the bike from an XC to DH mode, broadly speaking. Unlike other bikes, it has nothing to do with adjusting the shock. But the gas spring actuates a link that moves the shock forward, changing the effective eye-to-eye length of the shock.

The result works across three areas. The geometry changes by dropping the BB 19mm lower and slackening the head angle by 1.5 degrees. But it also changes the suspensions travel from 130mm to 160mm. The suspension curve is modified, with a change in sag and stiffness. The system adds about 186g, and has been developed so that it can be serviced pretty easily in the field – essential for a bike that gets raced in the EWS. Fabian Barel was easily able to take one apart and show us inside the link, with a minimum of tools.

In use, it takes a little getting used to. It's a hard setting to change off the bike, but a weight shift back with the lever compressed puts you into the DH setting, and a shift forward with the lever compressed brings it back to XC, with an indicator on the rocker showing you what setting you're in. With a few rides, it was easy enough to tell by how the bike was riding without referring to the indicator.

The frame itself is really well balanced, and it's easy to feel very centred on it, and appreciate the stiffness through the frame, link and back end. Barel was quick to point out that it wasn't a case of just making it as stiff as possible, but to get to a point of resilience and strength, but not so stiff that the bike would deflect off everything.

We had a lot of time on a Strive CF earlier in the year, so see the full bike review in Issue 152





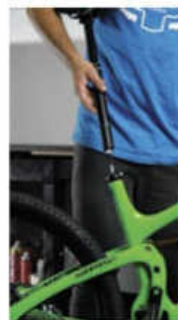
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# THE HUB



## BIKES REVIEWED

With 2016 fast approaching we get our hands on some of the latest steeds to land in the country and abroad.

Fuji Auric 1.3 - pg 74  
Lapierre Zesty XM 527 - pg 78  
BMC Fourstroke FS01 - pg 82

## TESTED

Our test team are some of the most respected and knowledgeable riders in Australia. With two months going hard in the mountains here is what they've uncovered for us this issue :

Bontrager XXX shoes - 88  
Reynolds Wheels - 89  
Kogel Bottom Bracket - 90  
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## THE HUB

Everything you need to know to tackle that next step and push you to the next level.

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TESTED





# MORE THAN METALLURGY

## THE FUJI AURIC 1.3

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIM BARDSLEY-SMITH TESTER: ADAM FERNYHOUGH

Fuji may not be the first brand that comes to mind in the current world of 'enduro' style bikes. More known for their road bikes and recreational models the Fuji Auric is set to launch the brand into the long travel trail bike world.

Consisting of a hydroformed A6 SL alloy frame, Fuji's top of the range lightweight, variable butted aluminium frame material, the Auric delivers a bike with 160mm of travel front and rear. The frame features a tapered headtube, BB30 press fit bottom bracket with ISCG 05 mounts, sealed cartridge bearings on all pivots and internal cable routing, including ports for stealth type dropper posts.

Our test bike, the Auric 1.3, sits next to top in the 4 model range and comes complete with a very capable group set and parts mix featuring, DT Swiss, Fox, SRAM and Shimano. Suspension is taken care of by Fox front and rear. Front suspension is provided by a Fox 36 Factory series fork with 3 position compression damping using Fox's new Fit4 system and external rebound adjustment. This provides 160mm of sublimely smooth and progressive travel in the yet to be rivalled super stiff 36mm stanchion fork chassis. Rear travel is perfectly controlled by a Fox Float Factory EVOL air can with 3 position compression damping and external rebound, the whole shock, body and piston is Kashima coated and again provides stiction free shock stroke.

The rest of the build kit crosses brands to give a best case scenario for durability and

performance. Using SRAM's 11 speed system, Fuji have chosen to use the X1 componentry rather than the more expensive X01 or XX1 group. Complementing the game changing 10-42 cassette is an Oval Concepts BB30 crank with Praxis Works narrow wide 32 tooth chain ring. Moving away from SRAM Fuji use Shimano XT, M8000, brakes to provide stopping power with 180mm rotors front and rear.

Wheels are provided by DT Swiss, using their Spline2 M1700 wheel set, with 15mm axle front and 148x12 'Boost' rear axle, with the hoops shod with Schwalbe Nobby Nic tyres in 27.5D x 2.35D, set up with tubes but complete with tubeless ready kit. Oval Concepts finish of the build using their bars, stem, grips and saddle. The final feature is the KS Lev dropper post with stealth routing.

When assembling a bike it is normal to make a few mental notes, while assembling the Auric I had lots of time to make these notes as the pre build was not of a standard that most bikes now come at, the Auric took far longer to assemble than I have come to expect, with some parts requiring disassembly to complete the build while other parts in the box not being required at all! Although not an issue for the end user, the shop guys will notice this.

After the build was complete it was time to ride. The Auric 1.3 has a reasonable weight of just over 13kgs without pedals, not heavy when considering it is a 160mm travel bike. However, the weight is brought down at a cost with the M1700 wheels, with a narrow 22.5mm inner width, and fairly light tyres, this combination feeling mismatched to a bike featuring Fox 36 forks and capable suspension.

### ON THE TRAIL

First ride out, I went with the old school inner tube set up. This soon turned into a mistake by getting a snakebite off a seemingly innocuous

## ADAM (FERNY) FERNYHOUGH RIDER BIO

Riding Experience: Over 25 years on mountain bikes, riding worldwide

Generally Rides: Santa Cruz Bronson, Orange 5  
Height: 178cm  
Weight: 83kg  
Bike Test Track: Upper and Lower Blue Mountains





section of trail. A quick fix had me going again only to suffer from another puncture a few kilometres down the track! Just as a reference, I usually ride about 100 kms per week and haven't had a puncture for I'd guess almost 2 years.

So back to the lab for the Auric to convert the wheels to tubeless, which turned out to be a very simple operation as the DT wheels come ready taped and Fuji supply tubeless valves. The Schwalbe tyres quickly sealed onto the rims with a very satisfying ping and we were ready to play again.

Ride take 2. With the tubeless tyres fitted I was able to properly ride the Auric 1.3. Initial thoughts were that the frame felt too steep in the head angle, listed at 67 degrees, and a little too short in the top tube, despite our large model frame having a 625mm effective top tube and a 435mm reach. While riding level or slight undulating singletrack this isn't a disadvantage as the steering remains more precise at the relatively slow speeds. When opening up the gas and navigating fast, steep sections this predictability turns into borderline front end instability and leaves you wondering if this geometry is really suited to a 160mm travel bike?

When traveling at speed a lead from the rear technique has to be employed to let the excellent M system rear suspension configuration keep you grounded and on track.

The parts package is a pleasure to use with everything working predictably as it should, and save for the more trail oriented wheels, the parts package suits its intended use 100% without paying out double the price to save a few grams. Fox have always been at the forefront of bike suspension and have always made incremental improvements year on year, however, there has always been an issue in setting Fox products up to

achieve the perfect medium between small bump compliance and traction and big hit capabilities. Fox have addressed these criticisms with their 2016 fork and shock range with the 36 fork and EVOL shock, a shock with no piggy back damping, being the best product range they have ever made.

The SRAM/Shimano mix for stop/go duties work very well together, with no equipment clashes on the bar the two separate company's components fit perfectly together. The KS Lev dropper post is also a great piece of kit, my only criticisms being the flimsy plastic actuator clamp and that you have to be fully off and away from the seat for it to return. I found that with even a small amount of pressure off my thigh on the side of the seat would stop the post from rising, not a big issue and one that can be amended after with the slightest adjustment to your riding style, on the flipside, the post descends with almost no effort making last minute seat drops quick and easy.

In riding the Auric I found it to be a very plush, but not overly active ride. The M system (mid link) also shared with Breezer is designed to minimise the amount that the linkage moves with its designers claiming that the linkage only moves 3 degrees to full travel. Although the system does look a little left of centre compared to most other modern designs the system does work extremely well, providing a very predictable and plush ride with little to no perceivable suspension wallow. To achieve this, while still keeping small bump compliance as well as big hit performance, shows that the M system is as competent as many or any of the other systems employed in the industry. In my opinion the Auric would suit someone who is venturing into the 'enduro' world rather than someone who has always ridden in that type of style or manner such as downhillers looking for a trail bike. It



**"ALTHOUGH THE SYSTEM DOES LOOK A LITTLE LEFT OF CENTRE COMPARED TO MOST OTHER MODERN DESIGNS THE SYSTEM DOES WORK EXTREMELY WELL, PROVIDING A VERY PREDICTABLE AND PLUSH RIDE WITH LITTLE TO NO PERCEIVABLE SUSPENSION WALLOW."**







### THREE THINGS YOU LIKED ABOUT THE BIKE

- Really stable suspension and great front and rear balance
- A great drivetrain package
- Playful handling in the air

### THREE THINGS YOU WOULD CHANGE ABOUT THE BIKE

- A stiffer wheel set
- Make sure you run it tubeless
- Play with some offset bushings to achieve a slacker head angle

handles better at slow speeds than many super low and raked out bikes but falls short in steep sections which depending on the pilot may not be an issue. The bike packs down evenly in bermed corners, and fights for traction on flat corners, this perfect combination achieved through the Fox suspension set up and the M system suspension, the Auric also doesn't mind a bit of air time either, with the 67 degree head angle not squashing the lips of your favourite trail jumps too much it's easy to keep composure in the air.

### FINAL IMPRESSIONS

All in, the Auric 1.3 is a bike that is not exactly the sum of its parts, the mismatched wheels were a letdown, the E series 1700s would have been a better choice. Geometry wise, the numbers don't tell the full story of the bikes capabilities. At \$5099 retail the Auric is fairly priced, and sits competitively in the industry for an alloy frame with this level of componentry. Certainly worth a look if you have found that your old XC bike is feeling a bit out of date and you are looking for new challenges on the trail, if considering a purchase, I'd advise a demo first.

### ESSENTIALS

BRAND	Fuji
MODEL	Auric 1.3
RRP	\$5099
WEIGHT	13.18kg (as tested)
DISTRIBUTOR	Oceania Bicycles
CONTACT	ocbicycles.com.au
AVAILABLE SIZES	15", 17", 19" [tested], 21"
FRAME MATERIAL	Hydroformed A6 SL Alloy
FORK	Fox 36 FLOAT 27.5 Factory FIT 160mm
SHOCK	Fox Float Factory EVOL 3-position w/ Kashima coat
SHIFTERS	SRAM X1 11sp
DERAILLEUR	SRAM X1 11sp
CRANK	Oval Concepts M610 w/ Praxis 32t
BOTTOM BRACKET	Oval M35
CHAIN	KMC X11
CASSETTE	SRAM XG-1175, 10-42 11sp
WHEELS	DT Swiss M1700 Spline
TYRES	Schwalbe Nobby Nic Snakeskin, 27.5 x 2.35"
BRAKES	Shimano XT 180mm rotors
STEM	Oval Concepts 600AM
HANDLEBARS	Oval Concepts 600, 9° sweep, 15mm rise
SEATPOST	KS Lev Integra Dropper
SADDLE	Oval Concepts 600







# FRESH ZEST FROM FRANCE

## THE LAPIERRE ZESTY XM 527

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY ARCH TESTER: WIL BARRETT

**Celebrating 70 years in 2016, the Dijon-based company is one of the largest bike brands in Europe, and it's quickly becoming a well-recognised name at our local trailheads.**

Backed by substantial manufacturing and R&D resources, Lapierre has earned itself a reputation for producing numerous innovative and award winning bikes over the years. Unique technologies such as their e:i electronic suspension platform have helped generate significant media buzz, while big name athletes such as Nico Vouillouz and Loic Bruni have been successfully flying the Lapierre (and French) flags in their respective racing disciplines.

We have previously tested the 150mm-travel Zesty AM and the 29"-wheeled Zesty TR. The combination of gorgeous looks, alpine-capable geometry and the active OST+ suspension design

on the Zestys has led to many "oh-la-la's" on the trail, both from test pilots and onlookers.

For 2016 however, Lapierre have undertaken a not-insignificant overhaul of the Zesty range, with an updated suspension design, lighter frames and reworked geometry applied across the line. Gone is the Zesty TR 29er, and Lapierre decided to redesign their 120mm trail bike with 27.5" wheels, and in the process, gave it a new name; the Zesty XM.

Starting from \$3999, there will be 3 Zesty XM models available in Australia: the 827, 527 and 327. The two top models are equipped with a







full carbon frame, while the Zesty XM 327 gets a cheaper alloy frame. Both the 827 and 527 models are also available in e:i versions too.

Over the past couple of months, I've been getting very familiar with the mid-spec Zesty XM 527. Given how high the Zesty TR set the performance bar, I was keen to find out whether Lapierre had made a mistake shelving the 29er in favour of smaller wheels. Would the new XM live up to the same lofty expectations?

## INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Whereas the 150mm travel Zesty AM is targeted towards hardcore riders frequenting steeper terrain, the 120mm travel Zesty XM is designed to be a lighter, more playful, and more versatile all-round trail bike.

Interestingly, both bikes largely share the same frame, but the Zesty XM runs a shorter stroke shock and a different upper shock mount. As a result, the beefy frame and oversized pivot junctions make the XM look more like a shrunken enduro bike, rather than a long-legged XC bike.

Lapierre know how to make a very good-looking bike, but the shapely carbon profile has been used primarily for function. The seat tube and main pivot have been offset to deliver crucial real estate for the direct-mount front derailleur, and the curvy sub-frame offers up butt-loads of tyre clearance for up to 2.4" wide rubber. The internal cable routing is sleek, with the bolt-on carbon armour plate at the base of the downtube doubling as a large access port for the cables. Other quintessential Lapierre touches include the carbon rear derailleur guard and a discreet removable sag indicator on the seat tube.

Despite the beefy appearance, a Medium Zesty XM frame weighs just 2.28kg with the rear shock. Titanium shock pins and large diameter alloy pivot hardware certainly helps, as does the full carbon frame and shock linkage. Lapierre have been perfecting their carbon frames both on the road and off it for many years now, with the Zesty XM frame receiving their latest carbon fibre construction. There's a 92mm wide press-fit bottom bracket shell to help strengthen the downtube and seat tube junction, while the massive headtube junction features a similar design with press-fit alloy cups.

**"THE ZESTY XM IS A TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE OF MODERN TRAIL BIKE GEOMETRY. MUCH LIKE A DOWNHILL BIKE, IT'S LONG, LOW AND SLACK, AND IT BEGS TO BE RIDDEN HARD."**

Part of the Zesty XM's light weight is also due to the new OST+ suspension design. Lapierre have removed the shock yoke from the previous design, which helps to shed grams while also creating a more progressive feel to the suspension curve. The goal was to give the new bike snappier pedaling and improved bottom-out resistance, while also allowing a water bottle to fit inside the front triangle thanks to the top tube-mounted shock. Suspension on the Zesty XM 527 is provided by RockShox, with a Monarch RT shock out back that uses the larger Debonair can. Up front is the highly underrated Revelation fork with 130mm of travel. Coming in at 1.8kg on our scales with a Solo Air spring and skinny 32mm stanchions, it's the Pike's baby brother.

The Zesty XM 527 is dressed up with the brand new Shimano M8000 Deore XT groupset. While some of the 'core' riders out there will scoff at the 2x11 setup, it's good to see Lapierre providing riders with gearing options, as it's an easy and inexpensive process to set the bike up as 1x if you so choose.

Wheels come in the form of a new OEM wheelset from RaceFace called the Aeffect. These are built with trick-looking CNC machined sealed bearing hubs, straight-pull spokes and brass nipples. The eyeleted rims feature a 23mm internal rim width, and I found them easy to setup tubeless with two layers of Stans Yellow rim tape. Unfortunately tape and valves aren't included with the bike, but the Maxxis tyres are Tubeless Ready models with the reinforced EXO casing. At 1720 grams, the Aeffect wheels surprised me by coming in well under their claimed weight.



## WIL BARRETT RIDER BIO

**Riding Experience:** With 15 years of riding experience, Wil has spent the majority of his life on two wheels. He's been testing and reviewing bikes for the past 3 years, and is obsessed with the technical details that go into producing a bike's geometry, handling and suspension characteristics. Wil occasionally puts on a number plate for the odd XC and marathon race, but he loves nothing more than riding technical singletrack and exploring backcountry trails.

**Generally Rides:** Cotic Solaris, Trek Fuel EX 29, Pivot LES 27.5  
**Height:** 175cm  
**Weight:** 67kg  
**Bike Test Tracks:** Bendigo, Castlemaine, Lakes Entrance, Mt Taylor





## ON THE TRAIL

As I've come to expect from Lapierre mountain bikes, the Zesty XM felt comfortable straight off the bat. The 740mm Nico Vouilloz handlebar has the perfect amount of rise and sweep, and for most riders it's the ideal width for aggressive trail riding. The thin lock-on grips have great tactility, and the SDG saddle proved to be a highly inoffensive perch for all those who tried it.

Compared to last year's Zesty TR, the overall reach of the Zesty XM remains much the same, but this time it's achieved by combining a longer 610mm top tube and a shorter 60mm stem. The stubby stem is necessary to speed up steering with the slacker 67-degree head angle. It does mean the XM experiences a certain amount of 'wheel flop' if you're dawdling up pinch climbs, but you quickly learn to compensate by dropping your elbows and leaning over the bars to help weight the front tyre.

Overall, the Zesty XM is a textbook example of modern trail bike geometry. Much like a downhill bike, it's long, low and slack, and it begs to be ridden hard. In the sag position, the bottom bracket axle sits just 30cm off the ground, which drops your center of gravity down between the hub axles. The Zesty XM also features a relatively steep seat tube angle, placing the rider between both wheels. The combination of these two attributes means the Zesty XM handles corners like a mid-engine racecar, with you feeling in complete control of all available grip.

Also contributing to this cornering composure is the stiff and lightweight frame, which is highly adept at making last-minute line changes. It also remains stable underneath you

## ESSENTIALS

BRAND	Lapierre
MODEL	Zesty XM 527
RRP	\$5999
WEIGHT	12.52kg (as tested)
DISTRIBUTOR	Advance Traders
CONTACT	advancetraders.com.au
AVAILABLE SIZES	Small, Medium (tested), Large, X-Large
FRAME MATERIAL	UD Carbon Fibre
FORK	RockShox Revelation RL Solo Air, 130mm
SHOCK	RockShox Monarch RT Debonair, 120mm
SHIFTERS	Shimano Deore XT 11-Speed
REAR DERAILLEUR	Shimano Deore XT Shadow+ Medium Cage
FRONT DERAILLEUR	Shimano Deore XT E-Type Direct Mount
CRANK	Shimano Deore XT 36/26t
BOTTOM BRACKET	Shimano BB71 Press-Fit
CHAIN	Shimano HG600 11-Speed
CASSETTE	Shimano Deore XT 11-Speed 11-40t
HUBS	Race Face Aeffect
SPOKES	Straight-Pull Double Butted
RIMS	Race Face Aeffect 27.5
TYRES	Maxxis EXO Tubeless Ready Ardent 27.5x2.25" fr & Ardent Race 2.20" r
BRAKES	Shimano Deore XT w/180mm RT86 Ice Tech Rotors
STEM	Easton EA70, 60mm
HANDLEBARS	Lapierre Nico Vouilloz Signature 6061, 740mm Width, 15mm Rise
SEATPOST	Kind Shock LEV Integra 31.6mm w/125mm travel
SADDLE	SDG Duster LP Custom

when you're pushign the bike deep into banked turns - a scenario where less-capable trail bikes can often begin to wiggle and feel vague. When you do reach the limits of traction, feedback from both tyres is translated well to the riders contact points, and the short back end means the rear tyre is easy to push into oversteer. The Ardent/ Ardent Race treads proved to be a decent enough combo for hardpack XC riding, but with the Zesty XM egging me on, it didn't take long for me to try a 2.3" High Roller II up front to see just how far I could push the bike on more technical terrain.

The new suspension design certainly delivers on its promise of improved pedaling efficiency, and it contributes a lot to the Zesty XM's 'pop' and playfulness on the trail. That said, it has definitely lost some of the plushness of the previous OST+ design. This is because rotational duties have been handed back to the shock's lower DU bushing, instead of the two sealed bearings used inside the shock yoke of old. Despite the fact that the Monarch features the Debonair can with its larger negative spring and smoother starting stroke, I still couldn't get the back end to feel as plush as the previous Zesty TR, which had one of the smoothest suspension designs going. One potential remedy would be to fit a needle roller bearing in the lower shock eyelet, and further tuning options would be to try some Bottomless Rings inside the air can (the rear shock comes stock with none).

To achieve the required 35% sag, I ended up settling on 190psi in the rear shock for my 70kg riding weight. I did find that the OST+ design is relatively sensitive to setup, as its virtual pivot point achieves equilibrium at the sag point, meaning anything outside of that starts to make the shock feel over/underworked. Once you get it right though, the rear suspension offers a very deep and bottomless feel, with an active mid-stroke that is not unlike a VPP bike. Larger high-speed hits are swallowed up admirably, to the



point where I was seriously questioning whether this was only a 120mm travel bike.

Without the funky e:i system controlling rear shock compression, the stock Monarch RT does feel boggy when you stand and hammer at the pedals, so you're better off remaining seated for pedalling. I typically left the shock wide open to do its job, but for long fireroad sections, the blue compression lever does come in handy to engage a firmer pedal platform.

Up front, I ran 88psi in the Revelation fork to put it at around 27% sag. In a further attempt to match the deep suspension feel out back, I also removed one of the two stock Bottomless Tokens to help open up the spring rate. It became apparent that I was fighting a losing battle though, as while the Revelation is a smooth fork that handles most impacts pretty well, it is no match for the bigger Pike fork – a fork that the Zesty XM is begging for. Now that modern carbon frames and wheel sets are becoming so much stiffer, any fork with 32mm stanchions on a trail bike just feels under-gunned, and that's especially noticeable on a bike that's as playful as the Zesty XM. Yes this is a sub-13kg carbon trail bike with 120mm travel, but the extra plushness and steering control from a PIKE would be well worth any weight penalty. On that note, I should also mention that the Zesty XM frame is rated for up to 140mm of fork travel should you want to slacken the bike out further.

I did run into a couple of niggles during my time with the Zesty XM 527, with the Shimano press-fit BB developing a nasty creak about half way through. Typically removing, cleaning and reinstalling the Nylon cups can remedy this, but it's frustrating to experience on such a new bike in 2016. I also had some of the pivot bolts work loose after the first few rides, with the two shock pins being devoid of any Loctite. A good reminder that any new bike needs a thorough check-over when it comes out of the box.

The new XT controls are an absolute delight to use thanks to the textured dimples on both the brake levers and shift paddles, and the indexing on the shifters is the most positive from Shimano yet. However, the shifting was never as smooth as I would expect from XT. I did find that the gear cables were crossed inside the downtube from new, but even after re-routing them, shifting remained heavy. Otherwise the range from the 2x11 system is fantastic, and on many occasions while riding long climbs alongside riders on 1x drivetrains, I took much delight in dropping the chain into the granny gear to save energy and spin my way uphill.

The KS LEV Integra dropper post offers up 125mm of smooth, infinitely adjustable travel, and the

minimalist remote works well. Bizarrely, the saddle would often refuse to return on its own if it was fully compressed for more than a couple of minutes. This annoying trait seemed to be independent of cable tension and seat clamp torque, with a quick tug of the saddle required to free the post up.

## OUR TAKE

You may have already picked up that the Zesty XM 527 arrived in my possession to a certain amount of skepticism. I was definitely a big fan of the Zesty TR, and I hate seeing good bikes being quashed by commercial pressures. Thankfully however, the Zesty XM proved me wrong. It isn't as fast as its 29" predecessor, it doesn't climb the chunder as well, and it just doesn't have the same raw bump-eating capabilities that the previous OST+ suspension design enjoyed. But the Zesty XM is without doubt a livelier and more playful trail bike that puts a spotlight on the very best attributes of the smaller 27.5" wheels.

In essence, the Zesty XM successfully combines capable big-bike geometry in a lighter and snappier carbon frame that makes it an absolute hoot to throw around on the trail. In my opinion, more riders could benefit from riding a bike like the Zesty XM rather than a big 6" travel all mountain rig. And realistically, with its 180mm rotors, dropper post and wide bars, the Zesty XM gives up very little in the capability stakes.

### THREE THINGS YOU LIKED ABOUT THE BIKE

- Confident big bike geometry in a tighter, lighter and faster package
- Supple and bottomless-feeling rear travel
- Excellent contact points

### THREE THINGS YOU WOULD CHANGE ABOUT THE BIKE

- A bike this capable warrants a Pike
- Add tubeless rim tape and valves straight off the bat
- Internal cable routing is messy and noisy





# SWISS MASTERPIECE

## THE BMC FOURSTROKE FS01

PHOTOGRAPHER: MIKE BLEWITT    TESTER: IMOGEN SMITH

You'd be forgiven for thinking that BMC (short for Bicycle Manufacturing Company) is as Swiss as chocolate and cheese. Not quite – the original company was founded in 1986 by American Bob Bigelow to distribute Raleigh Bicycles' product, later converting to a manufacturing brand. The real chrysalis into BMC as we know it, however, came in 2000, when Swiss pharmaceutical billionaire Andy Rihs (whose name many followers of the road scene might recognise), looking for new ways to market his cochlear implant company Phonak, bought the brand outright. Within a couple of years Rihs and BMC had developed the 'teammachine' road bike, launched Phonak Cycling Team, and started exporting internationally.

Market research showed that during this time, awareness of the Phonak brand trebled, providing a little insight into why pros like Richie Porte can afford a megavan – sponsors really do get a return on their hefty investments. Rihs himself has commented on the effectiveness of the pro cycling scene as a marketing vehicle, comparing it to the world's most popular sport: "when you invest CHF1 (in professional cycling) you get ten-to-twenty-times the advertising effect – football is by far not as productive", he says.

Most Aussie mountain bikers will also associate BMC with the road, as Cadel Evans piloted his

BMC bikes to victory in the Tour de France. Others might have noted Julien Absalon's 2014 World Cup success on board the bike. He raced the BMC Fourstroke for the first time to his memorable victory in the 2014 World Champs on a bumpy, rooty, and rocky track in Hafjell in Norway, causing commentator Rob Warner to reflect that "The era of full-suspension XC mountain bikes at the highest level is here". To this day, BMC pro mountain bikers choose the Fourstroke when terrain is particularly tough, and I was amazed to see the top men's Flow team at the Swiss Epic this year win their race, which took in all-out DH and 'enduro'-style trails, on Fourstrokes, with few







## IMOGEN SMITH RIDER BIO

**Riding Experience:** A regular AMB bike tester, Imogen has spent her adult life riding and racing mountain bikes.

**Generally Rides:** Bianchi Methanol 29 FS, Cannondale Caad 9 road bike  
**Height:** 171cm  
**Weight:** 57kg  
**Bike Test Track:** Engelberg trails, Switzerland

modifications: testament to this bike's versatility, strength, and performance.

The marks of the World Cup circuit are all over the Fourstroke, clearly designed for the demands of fast and technical XCO racing on tight and gnarly tracks with climbs to match. The XX1 version AMB tested sits nearly at the top of the BMC dual-suspension range, eclipsed only by a Di2 version likely to be graced by Absalon and other team riders next year.

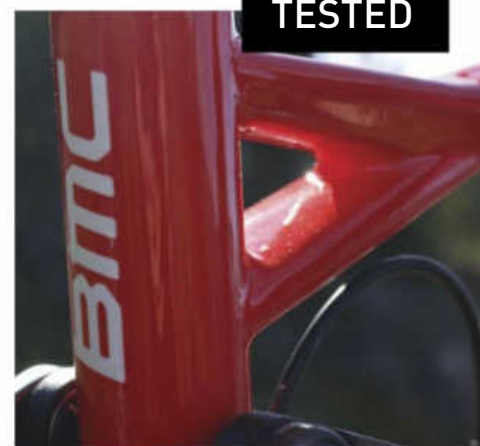
## INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Even at 100 paces, there's no mistaking a BMC Fourstroke. The bike is defined by a fat downtube, which provides an incredibly stiff and efficient foundation for the ride. Overall its look, particularly the alloy linkages and carbon frame, is sleek, strong, and very contemporary,

and the fire-engine, or "super" red is the same shade you'd associate with BMC as a brand, and everything Switzerland stands for: precision, quality, and mountains.

The short 70mm stem is also quite distinguishing, one of four points in the bike's geometry that BMC have tweaked with their 'Big Wheel Concept' geometry to get the best handling into a 29er frame, also shortening the chainstays, dropping the BB height, and lengthening the top tube. The frame is also stealth dropper compatible, something we may be seeing more and more of in XCO racing, even at the highest level where every gram counts, although we tested with the FS01 with a regular carbon seatpost.

The frame features a small 'chaincatcher' mounted into the frame behind the chainring to help prevent the dreaded chain-drop that can be a risk with single ring setups. In testing my chain stayed on, but it's worth mentioning that in my experience my chain only falls off in high stakes moments like when I'm attacking mid-race. Many pros are running lightweight chainguides these days to prevent chains bouncing off – a small mechanical but one that costs incredibly valuable time when every second counts. There's space for a direct-mount front derailleur if you're interested in running a dual chainring, but unless you're running Di2, you'll be looking at external cabling throughout (except the dropper). The direct mount brake caliper attachment is sleekly integrated into the seat stay, and the 142x12 through-axle is assembled with direct-mount rear derailleur hangers. Overall the package is neat, precise, and perfectly finished.



OVERALL ITS LOOK, PARTICULARLY THE ALLOY LINKAGES AND CARBON FRAME, IS SLEEK, STRONG, AND VERY CONTEMPORARY, AND THE FIRE-ENGINE, OR "SUPER" RED IS THE SAME SHADE YOU'D ASSOCIATE WITH BMC AS A BRAND, AND EVERYTHING SWITZERLAND STANDS FOR: PRECISION, QUALITY, AND MOUNTAINS.







### THREE THINGS YOU LIKED ABOUT THE BIKE

- Very stiff, owing to fat carbon downtube and cockpit setup
- Extreme pedalling efficiency worthy of a World-Champs-winning bike
- About as lightweight as a duallie's going to get

### THREE THINGS YOU WOULD CHANGE ABOUT THE BIKE

- I prefer a slightly slacker head angle, and would be willing to sacrifice steering precision for slightly more relaxed handling
- To like this bike, you really have to like the colour red
- Continental tyres aren't my favourites in most Aussie conditions, but easy to swap out

The Fourstroke comes equipped with the much-anticipated Fox Float DPS Factory Kashima rear shock, providing 100mm of plush travel with an improved range of compression damping. With three ride settings (open, medium, and firm; or 'climb, trail, descend'), the shock also now includes three clicks of low-speed compression adjust in 'open' mode and a really firm lockout. The shock performed admirably, particularly over small bumps, although it handled bigger hits with grace – just as you'd expect from a product of this pedigree and reputation. Up front the Fox 32 Float Factory Series FIT4 was the perfect counterpart. Fox's lightest fork on offer, it also offers three on-the-fly ride settings (Open, medium, and lockout). The front and rear suspension is controlled with a bar-mounted, mechanical lever on the left-hand of the bars, allowing one-click unlock and the ability to toggle through the three ride settings until locked out. This is a great feature, and means that in competitive situations riders can control their shocks without taking their hands off the bars, but in reality all that cable, plus a splitter, adds up, and actuating the lever can be tough on the thumb joint. Give one a try if you don't believe me.

But it's the bike's design, as much as the suspension setup, that dictates the ride feel, and BMC's 'APS' suspension (advanced pivot system) claims to provide top-level performance, using the same technology found in the heftier TrailFox, but tweaked for pedalling efficiency. Julien Absalon is known for his loyalty to the hardtail, and the fact that BMC have got him on a duallie at all is testament to the designers' skill, which, we're told on the BMC website, "optimises kinematics and pivot placements, leverage ratios, axle paths and shock dimension". The two short links that attach the rear triangle to the mainframe work together to absorb bumps and maintain a strong pedalling platform with very little pedal bob, some of the least I've experienced in any duallies I've tested. That said, some riders may even find the suspension action too reticent, in which case a return to shock setup will be necessary.

The promises of BMC's 'Big Wheel Concept' geometry – superior handling for longer wheelbases and 29" wheels – held up. The cockpit setup, with the 70mm stem and carbon 720mm bars is combined with a steep head angle of 70 degrees, which together will take anyone used to slacker geometry a bit of getting used to. The bar and stem are incredibly stiff and the bars have a pleasing sweep. As you'd expect, the fourstroke



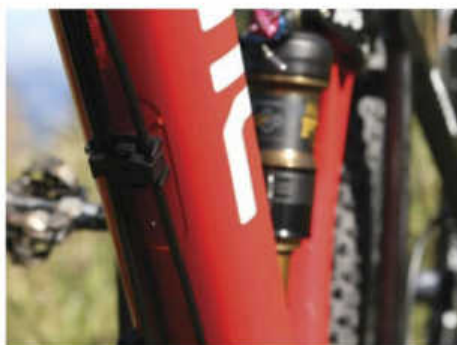
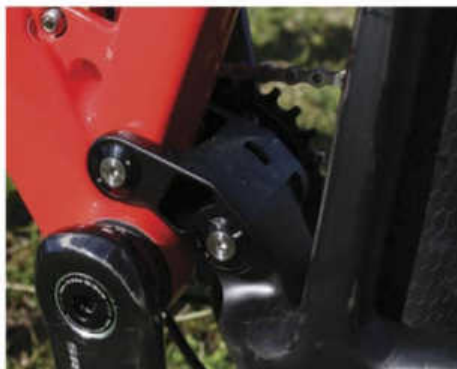
excels in tight corners and switchbacks. On the ground, the Continental Race King and X-King tyres were serviceable, and BMC have wisely chosen to spec the bike with a more aggressively-treaded front tyre and a faster-rolling rear but, as always, tyres are always a matter of personal preference and are easily swapped to suit you and your local riding conditions – just make sure you ask your BMC dealer to set them up tubeless.

### OUR TAKE

Overall, the BMC fourstroke is a purebred race machine designed for pedalling efficiency, agile handling, and the demands of the World Cup circuit: It's light, quick, and super-stiff. This bike is intended for use on bumpy and challenging XCO tracks, but with a few modifications, like adding a dropper and tweaking the suspension tune, it could perform really well as a lightweight trail bike for those who want the edge on the climbs. It's equally well-suited to marathon racers, particularly those riders looking for the comfort of a duallie boiled down into the weight of a high-end hardtail.







ESSENTIALS	
BRAND	BMC
MODEL	Fourstroke 01 XX1
RRP	\$11799
WEIGHT	10.1kg (as tested)
DISTRIBUTOR	advancetraders.com.au
AVAILABLE SIZES	S (tested), M, L
FRAME MATERIAL	Carbon
FORK	Fox 32 Float Factory Series FIT4 Kashima Remote 100mm
SHOCK	Fox Float Factory Series DPS Kashima Remote 100mm
SHIFTERS	SRAM XX1
DERAILLEUR	SRAM XX1
CRANK	SRAM XX1 30T
BOTTOM BRACKET	Pressfit GXP
CHAIN	Sram PC-X1
CASSETTE	SRAM XX1 10-42T
HUBS	DT Swiss XR 1501 Spline ONE
SPOKES	DT Competition Straightpull
RIMS	DT Swiss XR 1501 Spline ONE
TYRES	Continental X-King/Race King 29x2.2
BRAKES	Shimano XTR M9000
STEM	BMC MSM 02 70mm
HANDLEBARS	BMC MFB 01 720mm Carbon
SEATPOST	BMC MSP 01 Carbon 27.2mm
SADDLE	Fizik Tundra M5 K'ium





# TAMING THE TORRENT

## THE AVANTI TORRENT CS FRAMESET

PHOTOGRAPHER: TIMOTHY ARCH TESTER: WIL BARRETT

As an Australasian brand that has been in our local bike shops for three decades, many of us will have either owned an Avanti bike at some point, or had a mate who's owned one. Back in 2010, Avanti broke out of their hardtail mould and made a successful relaunch into the full suspension market with the introduction of the Vapour XC and the Torrent. It may have come as a surprise to many at the time, but given the proximity of Avanti HQ to the riding Mecca of Rotorua, it really shouldn't have.

Amongst the Avanti development team, a talented and passionate group of mountain bikers and industrial designers decided that they could offer something different to their American and Taiwanese competitors. The Vapour XC and Torrent were the result of their efforts, with the TRU-4 Bar suspension design, burly pivot junctions and one-piece TruLink delivering solid performance that placed an emphasis on reliability and durability.

### TORRENTIAL CAPABILITY

Fast-forward to 2016, and the popular Torrent enters its 4th generation with a number of key updates over the original 26" model. Addressing the needs of the modern all-mountain market, the Torrent CS has been redesigned around 27.5" wheels. With slacker geometry, a bump up to 150mm of rear travel, and the capability of taking up to a 160mm travel fork, it's an ideal choice for budding enduro competitors and hard-hitting trail riders.

The Torrent CS frame set employs a CM6 carbon front triangle that bares technology derived from Avanti's highly regarded road line. The carbon front-end is paired to a hydroformed alloy sub-frame via the TRU-4 Bar suspension linkage, which employs replaceable sealed cartridge bearings at each junction.

Our medium test frame weighed in at 2.89kg, which includes the Fox Float rear shock. Despite the impressive weight, Avanti have scrutinised every detail to ensure the Torrent CS frame is equipped to handle the kind of abuse that a heavy-set trail rider can dish out on a gnarly black-diamond descent. The one-piece TruLink helps to minimise side loading on the rear shock, while the enormous forged dropouts and DT Swiss thru-axle aim to keep the rear wheel tracking straight. Welded braces and clevis pivots enhance rigidity further, resulting in a twist-free frame that should deliver confidence when you're sending it off colossal rock drops.

In addition to looking tough as, the Torrent CS frame set is also a thoroughly modern machine front to back. There's a fully integrated head tube with drop-in bearings, a PF30 bottom bracket, post-mount rear brake tabs, and stealth dropper routing. Gear cables run internally through the main triangle, while the rear brake hose and dropper cable are secured externally by neat T-clamps underneath the downtube. You can fit a lower direct-mount mech if you so choose, and there are even ISCG05 tabs for riders who feel the need for a chain device. Small, but appreciated details include the alloy pivot bearing caps, which conveniently have recommended torque levels etched into them.







Included with the frame is the Fox Float CTD Factory rear shock, which looks slick with the gold Kashima coating. Avanti have worked alongside Fox to tune the shock's internal Boost Valve pressure and damping levels for the Torrent CS's four-bar linkage, with the main goals being small-bump sensitivity and bottom-out resistance. In addition to spring pressure and low-speed rebound adjustment, the blue CTD lever offers the rider 3 levels of on-the-fly compression damping. The frame's lower shock mount can also be flipped, which steepens the head angle by half a degree and lifts BB height by 5mm. Along with the ability to run a 150 or 160mm travel fork, there are certainly options for fine-tuning the Torrent CS's ride quality.

## THE OUTFIT

In addition to putting our Avanti Torrent CS test bike through the wringer, this frame set will also serve as a longterm test bed for other review

components, including suspension, wheels and group sets.

To begin with, we've paired the Torrent CS to a 160mm travel Formula 35 fork. As the lightest fork in its class, the 35 certainly looks the part with its black anodised 35mm stanchions and machined adjusters. Stay tuned for our thoughts on this lightweight Italian-made beauty in a coming issue.

As reviewed in this issue, the Reynolds AM Carbon 27.5 wheels continue the Torrent's theme of stiffness, durability, and respectable weight. The fat carbon rims are wrapped with Maxxis EXO rubber, which comes in the form of a 2.3" High Roller II up front and a 2.35" Ikon out back.

Also reviewed in this issue is the Praxis 1x10 drivetrain, which features a wide range 11-40t cassette to deliver welcome low-range gearing for technical ascents. The Turn Girder crank set

uses hollow forged alloy crank arms and a 30mm spindle, which spins inside a Praxis M30 bottom bracket. This BB fits inside a standard PF30 bottom bracket shell, but it uses alloy cups that thread together and expand inside the shell to provide a snug and (hopefully) creak-free fit. I look forward to updating you next time on that one...

Making for exceptional value, Avanti also include an X-Fusion Hilo dropper post. This dropper has 125mm of infinitely adjustable travel, and being the Strate model, it runs the cable internally through the seat tube. Because of the 1x10 setup, the dropper remote can be setup right where the left-hand shifter would normally sit.

In its current guise, the Torrent CS tips the scales at 12.3kg. Pretty damn impressive for a burly 150mm travel bike that features a 160mm fork, dropper post, wide bars, and fat tubeless rubber!

## INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Setup at 30% sag, the Torrent CS delivers a very plush and smooth ride, with a bottomless feel to the rear suspension that certainly lives up to it's design intentions. For my 70kg riding weight, I've got 150psi in the rear shock, 50psi in the fork, and rebound set on the slower side. I'm also very impressed with how the Torrent CS pedals for a 150mm travel bike, though admittedly a lot of that has to do with the carbon wheels and overall bike weight.

In terms of fit, the Torrent CS is available in small, medium and large frame sizes, with the effective top tube lengths being 56.5cm, 59.5cm and 62cm respectively. While I wouldn't consider those numbers overly short, the Torrent CS does appear to be more compact next to some of the super-long top tubes we're seeing on modern bikes within the same travel bracket. That said, I've found a comfortable riding position with a 60mm stem and 750mm low-rise handlebars, and without a limousine wheelbase, the Torrent CS also feels easier to manage for the average trail rider.

With a 150mm travel fork, the head angle runs at 66.5-degrees in the slack position, while the seat angle sits at 73-degrees. The geometry and suspension design favour descending control rather than uphill prowess, but that's exactly what the bike aims to do.

Keep an eye out for our follow-up review, where I'll be providing a more detailed assessment of the Torrent CS's performance, along with a durability report on all the parts I've been testing on the bike. For now though, I can say that Avanti appear to have delivered a very capable and very high quality all-mountain machine. Will the Torrent become a more recognised name when riders think of Avanti? We'll just have to wait and find out!

RRP: \$3199

[www.avantibikes.com](http://www.avantibikes.com)



TESTED



# BONTRAGER XXX MTB SHOE

WORDS AND PHOTOS: MIKE BLEWITT

Before Bontrager were under the Trek umbrella, they were their own brand, producing some fine products, including exceptional steel and titanium hardtail frames. The man behind the brand, Keith Bontrager, coined the oft-mentioned phrase "Light, cheap, strong. Choose any two." The XXX range of parts and accessories is certainly light and strong, but not particularly cheap. That said, if you demand exceptional performance from your XC focused parts, then XXX components are typically exceptional value.

Having tested the Bontrager RXL shoes almost two years ago, I was really impressed with the fit, stability and overall durability of the shoes. The XXX is a no-compromise cross country shoe that Bontrager claim is "Simply our fastest, most advanced mountain shoe ever". Those are big claims, but looking through the specs of the shoe it's easy to see why they are happy to make them.

Based on the inForm Pro last, Bontrager have tuned the ergonomics of their shoes for a high performance fit – that means minimal toe wiggle and no need to tighten them up ridiculously to get them to stay put. Having owned shoes that feel like you're just strapped to two solid planks, the shape of the last and upper, along with the closure, has created a very secure and comfortable feeling shoe.

The sole is rated to a stiffness index of 14 – which I don't understand, except that it must be better than anything rated 1-13. It is a very stiff thing. Tachyon rubber is used on the lugs around the cleat, and all the way forward to the toe, which should protect the carbon sole from the inevitable hike-a-bike sections. The rear lug is minimalist, but it should suffice for anything so steep and sketchy you need to run down with your heels dug in. There's a tiny bit of file tread on the instep, but it's unlikely to save you on really slippery logs and

rocks. As a point of difference, the lugs around the cleat on the RXL are replaceable – not so on the XXX.

The two BOA closures and velcro strap allow a really precise fit. I've had numerous shoes with the BOA system, and while the cords do wear out, they are replaceable, unlike velcro straps and unlike some basic buckles. The BOA system does allow an exact fit that's easy to adjust while on the bike, and the padded tongue helps to make them supremely comfortable.

The upper is crafted from Clarino microfibre, with some mesh near the toe and along each side for much needed ventilation in an Australian summer. It's also got plenty of rubberised protection built in with a large toe bumper that extends a fair way inside the foot, and along much of the outside. The heel is left free from external protection, but if you're not using your XC shoes for all-mountain adventures that should be ok.

The uppers were really nice and supple, and in my first outing I rode to and from a cyclocross race with no problem with pressure points or anything that you might expect while waiting for a shoe to 'soften up'. The inside of the heel is lined with a non-slip material. A very stiff sole can equal heel slip when walking, but this addition along with a great fit and the BOA closures prevented that for my feet. The cleat pockets are pretty long, and it was easy enough to get the cleats into my preferred position. The pocket is a little narrow though, so they might jam up a little in gritty clay-based mud. It's really not much different to other leading XC shoes though, and that sort of mud is likely to be causing plenty of other problems on your bike anyway.

With a pretty wide foot, sometimes I need to compromise on shoe size to get the right fit,

taking a European 43-45, depending on the shoe and the brand. I wore a 44 for the test and they were a little longer than my regular shoes. Slight size variations is nothing new, but it does reinforce how important it is to buy shoes from a reputable store where you can try them on to make sure you get the best fit. The footbed is pretty basic, and quite different to what Specialized or Shimano offer. But if you know you need extra support, take it along with you when you try some on.

In use, I haven't been able to fault the XXX MTB shoes. Even with a super stiff sole they didn't slip on my heel if off and running (thanks to the grippy material in the heel), and they have worn quite well for normal XC use. The uppers don't have as much protection underneath from sharp rocks like an all-mountain shoe might, nor as much grip. But that's to be expected. If you're after a high-performance race shoe that's also lighter than much of the competition, it's worth getting into your local Trek dealer to try a pair on.

## ESSENTIALS

### HITS

- Exceptional stiffness
- Clean design
- Brilliant fit with BOA closures

### MISSSES

- Fire engine red might not suit everyone
- A basic footbed

RRP: \$429.00  
From: [bontrager.com](http://bontrager.com)





# REYNOLDS 27.5 AM CARBON WHEELS

WORDS AND PHOTOS: WIL BARRETT

It may come as a surprise then that Reynolds Cycling actually debuted their very first carbon mountain bike wheel set way back in 2007. Called the Topo, the complete wheel set came in at just 1350 grams at a time when the idea of employing a composite rim for off-road use was mind-blowing. The Topo's ride quality and durability proved their worth though, and Reynolds has been growing consumer confidence in carbon wheels ever since.

Addressing the needs of today's long-travel superbikes, the AM Carbon Wheels are Reynolds' strongest and widest mountain bike offering yet. This 27.5" wheel set has been designed and engineered to handle the rigours of Enduro racing and hardcore trail thrashing, with 31mm wide tubeless-compatible rims, adaptable hubs and a user-serviceable design.

Coming in at a confirmed weight of 1.75kg, the AM Carbon wheels aren't blisteringly light, but as I've found over a season of hard riding, this wheel set has got more to offer than just a number on the scales.

## BOLD & BEEFY

Strapping the AM Carbon wheels to any bike immediately gives it presence. The bold white graphics and 30mm deep profile appear purposeful, and the red anodised hubs and matching red nipples look trick without being gaudy.

The CNC machined alloy hubs are Reynolds' own design, featuring hollow alloy axles and oversized sealed cartridge bearings. The front hub is adaptable for 9/15/20mm axles, and the rear hub can be setup for 135mm or 142x12mm dropouts. All end caps are included in the box, although a SRAM XD driver is available separately for \$179.

The AM Carbons receive Reynolds' latest MR5 construction technique, which specifies different carbon fibres and lay-up patterns for each of the 5 key parts of the rim. Reynolds source the raw material from Mitsubishi in Japan, and the resin comes from the US. The carbon cloth is then compressed in the molds under incredibly high pressure to create a dense and void-free structure.

While each rim is claimed to weigh just 440 grams each, Reynolds have put the emphasis on strength and stiffness. Fat, 4mm thick sidewalls boost the rim's impact strength, while reducing the likelihood of a snakebite.

Tubeless tape and valves are included in the box, and the pronounced bead hooks provide a satisfying "snap" as the tyre beads lock into place during inflation. No compressor needed either.

## ON THE TRAIL

The majority of the AM Carbon's trail time was spent aboard our longterm Avanti Torrent test bike, where they've been used and abused on some very ugly terrain.

Acceleration is prompt, and the AM Carbons are easy to keep ticking along at speed. The smooth hub bearings must also be given credit here. Compared to Reynolds' previous design, the new rear hub features double the pawls, and double the engagement points (54). The freehub isn't obnoxiously loud while you're coasting down the trail, and pickup at the pedals is excellent.

Despite running tyre pressures in the sub-20psi region, the AM Carbon's have remained stable and composed, shrugging off many direct rock strikes and aggressive side loading. On the kind of heavy landings that I'd typically expect some 'pinging' noises to emanate from the wheels, the AM Carbon's remained silent. That's the result of a well-balanced wheel build, and the high spoke tensions that are possible with carbon rims and the DT Swiss Revolution straight-pull spokes.

Lateral rigidity is awesome. This was most apparent on the back end of the Torrent, where tyre clearance is extremely limited with 2.35" rubber. Despite the tight fit, I had no untoward rubbing between tyre and chainstays.

The AM Carbon's give the bike a flighty feel once in the air, making whips and last-minute directional changes easier. Their responsiveness does take a little getting used to though, and you'll want to make sure that you've got tyre pressure and suspension setup dialled in. Otherwise you run the risk of getting pin-balled off line through rock gardens.

## OUR TAKE

After many miles of testing, I can conclude that the Reynolds AM Carbon wheels are quite possibly the strongest wheels I have ever ridden. I've had no broken spokes, no damage to the rims, and the bearings are spinning beautifully smooth with no detectable play anywhere. The rims also offer a very secure tubeless setup, with their 23mm internal width and generous bead hooks providing a stable base for rubber up to 2.4" wide. While I've been testing much wider rims lately, I'm not totally convinced that they're necessary, and particularly when the AM Carbons already provide a great profile with the 2.2-2.3" tyres I've tested.

The AM Carbons aren't crazy light or wide, but they're a significant performance enhancer for any trail bike. It may be a big investment initially, but in the long run you can be guaranteed that you'll have a strong and serviceable wheel set, which rides damn well too.

## ESSENTIALS

### HITS

- Strong and reliable
- Adaptable, smooth rolling hubs
- They improve the ride of your bike

### MISSES

- They are still a big investment

RRP: \$2500

From: [bikesportz.com.au](http://bikesportz.com.au)





# KOGEL PF30 BB

## WITH CERAMIC BEARINGS AND CROSS SEALS

Kogel aren't new nor are they inexperienced in the world of bearings, but as a new entrant to the Aus marketplace they probably aren't a household name to you...yet. With extensive R&D and fussy, fussy material and tooling selection, Kogel come from the higher end of the market, focusing on durability and excellence in every little part their products contain. Intriguingly (and somewhat disturbingly stimulating), is their claim to offer instant gratification...yes, we're still talking bearings and in this case, ceramic bearings, sheltered by proprietary Cross/MTB seals all encased in their PressFit 30 bottom bracket which we've just clocked 1000kms on.

Ok, it's hard to get excited about the aesthetics of a BB, (a cool Anod colour is generally the most you can push it) especially as it's a mostly hidden component. But, a few things strike you in handling the Kogel unit. It's a tidy, anodised Aluminium 2-piece unit that glides together nicely. But the real smarts are its design. It's clear the unit has been designed with the full spectrum/ minefield of frames out there in mind. The unit tapers and reduces in the middle to allow for internal cabling and the 'nub' some bikes have for the cable guide underneath. Its seals and bearings are fully marked (for future identification) and it has not 1 but 3 integrated o-rings to ensure the unit nestles into your frame and seals the bearings internally from frame-held water.

You can tell this unit is made to endure. Ceramic bearings are touted for their smooth running but can vary in quality. Kogel use only the top end of ceramic hybrids (Silicone Nitride), which suit an application such as a BB best. Smooth running: tick, low temp build up: tick and a touch lighter than steel bearings: tick. Also equipped with Kogel's own MTB/Cross seals to keep the outside on the outside, longevity just got a tick. Talking tolerances? The Kogel unit shines. The bearing

aces and the unit sleeves are TLAT (Toight Like A Tiger). In keeping on the tolerances note, your riding buddies should've have their patience worn thin from being subjected to your creaking/ clicking/grinding bike (we all have that one riding buddy), installed correctly, the Kogel unit will give you the stealth all BBs should, but some don't provide - seen and not heard.

We've clocked 1000kms and the unit is spinning freely, silently and, well, gratifyingly. Things are pretty rosy on the future maintenance front too. Designed to be upgradable and replaceable, the bearings races can be pressed out and replaced once the bearings have done their time (8,000kms plus). Conditions and your devastating Wattlebombs will obviously affect this, but that's a cracking lifespan.

### OUR TAKE

Durable, well made, well thought out. Oh and light. If you like noises and changing your BB, this product isn't for you. It's high-end, so not cheap, but performance and durability (yes you can have both) never is.



## ESSENTIALS

### HITS

- Durable
- Light
- Silent

### MISSSES

- A little on the expensive side

RRP: \$264.99

From: [lead-out.com.au](http://lead-out.com.au)



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# FIRST LOOK: SHIMANO'S DEORE XT M8000 1X11

WORDS: MIKE BLEWITT PHOTO: DAMIAN BREACH

Shimano's Deore XT goes way back to 1983, beginning life as a touring group set. While it's undergone countless changes since then, it's always been known as a hard-wearing performance group set. It has never had the "no cost spared" materials or production of XTR, but XT has always come very close in performance, with substantially less cost.

After Shimano introduced single chain ring options of the new M9000 11 speed XTR in 2014, it was obvious that XT would soon get the same treatment. In a sense, it did. But the new M8000 has included a single chain ring specific option with a wider range cassette, plus regular double chain ring models (triple options aren't currently supported in Australia).

We've got a 1x11 Shimano M8000 group set that has just arrived for review. With a couple of weeks of riding on it, here are our first thoughts.

## COMPONENTS OF ADVENTURE

One of the things most people got excited about with M8000 XT was the option of an 11-42 cassette, which didn't require a new freehub body. The 11-42 cassette has been designed for use with the 1x11 group set only, so there is also an 11-40 cassette for those running the 2x11 setup.

The big question is – how well does 11-42 cover the range? Without the need for an XD driver, the M8000 group (or part of) really does offer a great upgrade alternative to riders using 10 speed. The 11-42 spread of 11-13-15-17-19-21-24-28-32-37-42 is a neater spread than using a one-up option on a 10 speed cassette, and shifts better too. But

there's no denying that an 11t isn't a 10t, and that's about 10% of the range. Racers will notice that difference, but so will anyone wanting to ride hard and fast. Functionally though, the shifting is smooth and the range has proven to be spot-on for the trail riding we have been doing.

The tooth profile of the chain ring follows XTR – although with their own bolt pattern. The tall and wide teeth have so far done a brilliant job of holding the chain. Set up on a 140mm travel Norco Sight, with no chain device, we're yet to drop a chain. There are plenty of lightweight chain devices on the market, and they would be a good insurance policy if you're racing or riding really hard.

**“THE SHIFTING IS SMOOTH AND THE RANGE HAS PROVEN TO BE SPOT-ON FOR THE TRAIL RIDING WE HAVE BEEN DOING.”**

The rear derailleur almost mimics the M9000 XTR model, with an adjustable clutch so you can tune the tension, which also changes how firm the shifting action is. You'll want to keep it pretty strong if you're riding rough trails, but it allows riders to tune the system to suit their bike and riding. The option to turn it 'on and off' for fitting your wheel remains.

The shifters have had a minor overhaul, and not just to have an 11th position. The shift levers

have a really crisp feel, with a distinct click on actuation. The paddle shape is a lot like the latest XTR shifters, and they sit in just the right place. The tactile feedback and audible actuation make it easy to tell when you've shifted. Given the group is billed "the components of adventure" the chances of the group set being attached to a bike that's being ridden pretty hard is quite high, so that solid shift feel is much appreciated.

While the shift feel is adjustable thanks to the tuning of the clutch, it still doesn't match the ultra-light shift feel of M9000 XTR. It's a noticeable extra effort, but it also reflects the price difference between the group sets and parts. It's a world different to the old XT, but not as amazing as the new XTR.

XT brakes have long been heralded as one of the best in the business, and the changes to the M8000 model have made their feel more progressive, and improved the feel of the lever. The brakes don't have such an aggressive initial bit, with power deeper in the stroke. They're less grabby, which should be very popular. It really is hard to go past Shimano's lever feel, and that remains on the M8000 units, with a slimmer lever and body that could pass as XTR models in low light. Their clamp also changed to work with the new iSpec standard, where the shifter mount is held under the bar clamp.

So far, the group, and wheels, work flawlessly. It's not the same as XTR, but it feels great and has a wider range in a 1x11 setup. We'll have a full review in our next issue, but M8000 receives a big thumbs up so far.





# TOMTOM BANDIT PREMIUM PACK

WORDS AND PHOTOS: MATT PAGE

The action camera segment is a saturated one and extremely competitive. Major brands like Sony and Panasonic are trying to vie against long term leaders GoPro. New comers to the market are constant, with a reputable brand like TomTom offering a new action camera we anticipated a polished and well thought out product.

## GETTING A FIRST LOOK.

One of the most important factors for an action camera is its size, or lack of it. Smaller is usually better, so long as it remains easy to use. The TomTom Bandit is certainly no class leader for size. It is noticeably bigger and heavier than a GoPro Hero 4 (encased) and similar in size to the Drift.

The design is nice and simple, a bullet design similar to the previous generation Garmin VIRB. Much like the VIRB it also has GPS functions, something you would expect from a leader in satellite navigation devices. This means the ability to record speed, rotation, altitude and G-Force, adding an extra element to videos, for your own memory or the entertainment of others.

The design includes a twist and remove Batt-Stick, giving relatively painless battery replacement, should you need the ability to shoot beyond the claimed 3hr battery life from the 1900mAh battery which is around 40% larger than the GoPro Hero 4 (1160mAh).

All the expected video resolutions are covered, from 4K (15fps), 2.7K (30fps), 1080p (60/30fps), 720p (60/120) and stills at 16 megapixels.

In the box of the premium pack are also a range of mounts, from stick-on flat and curved mounts, a GoPro mount adapter and what TomTom claim to be a handlebar mount, although it seems unnecessarily large. It does allow fitting to your bars, seatpost, frame or fork for unique angles. The premium pack also includes a dive-proof cover, in addition to the standard splash proof cover, both of which should be fine for normal riding. Another novel feature of the Bandit is the ability to twist the Bandit, rotating it 180° while mounted, useful for mount options that can't be set horizontal. It is similar in some ways to the Drift cameras, although they only rotate in 90° sections. This feature alone should let you achieve angles much more interesting than standard POV footage.

## IN USE

We initially chose to use the GoPro adapter mount, which we are sure will be the most common given the massive range of neat 3rd party options that already exist. Something we noticed immediately was the amount of play in the mount, between the camera and the adapter.

The controls are easy to use, especially the ability to press record while riding with a audible beep to let you know it is recording. The small screen on the unit gives a clear display of battery life, time recording and storage remaining, a notable plus over the GoPro due to where it locates its user screen. You can also change the mode between video, camera, slo-mo, time-lapse and also easily access the settings menu.

In use the function that allows the unit to rotate 180° becomes a little unstuck, rotating by itself in normal riding conditions. The ability to lock the rotation would be nice and would solve the issue, but sadly it does not exist. Also the play that is evident within the mounts translates across to the video and editing, where an audible rattle is evident throughout, although there is almost no movement in the video itself.





The camera itself feels rugged and durable, but there are a few areas that let it down. During one very slow speed fall the thin plastic tabs on the adapter mount snapped, meaning that mount adapter became unusable. As all other mounts share the same design, we think this is a weakness within the package. Another concern is the glass lens cover, which cracked while dropping it from no higher than 30cm.

The stand out advantages of the Bandit are the image quality and also the ease of editing. It produces beautifully clear, well balanced images in a full range of conditions from full sun to dark shaded tree covered trails. On one trail while tested we even entered a near pitch black tunnel and the camera's ability to pick up even the dimmest of lights while inside and its speed reacting back to full sunlight was impressive.

Editing can be done in the traditional way, via a computer in which case the removable Batt-Stick is useful with its USB connection and in-built SD card allowing for easy transfer of captured videos. TomTom also really play on the units ability to edit itself, with its "Shake to Edit" functions via an app. Navigating within the app to "Create a Story" a simple shake of the device creates a fully edited video, taking highlights from what has been shot. Using the on-board sensors to pick out the best bits and create a compilation. It is still possible to edit or remove sections and also add music from your devices music library and overlay speed or G-Force and once finished simply save and upload. This alone is a cool feature that should make the Bandit highly popular for ease of shooting and sharing.

## OUR TAKE

TomTom bring some fantastic new and class leading features to the action camera market. The editing capabilities, GPS functions, possible overlays and impressive video performance really make it stand out.

The frustrations come when using the Bandit in action sports. The fragile glass lens cover and parts within the mount which broke too easily. The rotation function might be a fantastic feature for other uses of action cameras, but sadly within a rough environment like mountain biking where a stable mount is vital, it becomes a constant frustration.

For a high-end action camera the TomTom Bandit delivers on many features and with some tweaks it would be a real contender against the established rivals.

## ESSENTIALS

### HITS

- Video quality
- Ease of editing
- GPS functions
- Extra layer to videos

### MISSES

- Fragile in use
- rotation function flawed
- larger and heavier than most rivals

RRP: \$579.00

From: [tomtom.com/bandit](http://tomtom.com/bandit)



# BOUNCE BALLS

WORDS AND PHOTOS: TBS

We're roadside having a debate whether 'bounce' is a UK, American or Australian company. I'm not sure what the difference or importance is but the discussion is getting heated, it's probably just because Tim just needs to eat a Bounce ball and stop being hangry. Luckily these bounce balls are all protein packed too, nutritionists say that keeps you fuller for longer, it's science.

We grabbed a handful from the servo and it was a surprise. Here's what we got:

## APPLE CINNAMON – PROTEIN PUNCH

Everyone knows what apple and cinnamon tastes like, it seems the go-to for an energy bar company, but Bounce have wrapped them in peanuts, it's a good balance of sweet and that little bit of perfect salty, creating that addictive taste of salted beer nuts.

## PEANUT – PROTEIN BLAST

Chewy, simple, and packed full of flavour, these are not for the faint-hearted but we all know those children (and adults) who go to the cupboard, grab a big soup spoon and take a scoop straight out of the peanut butter jar... this is for them.

## SUPERBERRY – VITALITY BLAST

Berries, nature's superfood. Whether you're into superfoods or not these taste damn good, a great mix of berries, with a hint of vanilla and rolled in coconut. They're health food's answer to the jam donut!

## COCONUT MACADAMIA – PROTEIN BLISS

This is my favourite, a flavour that cannot be faulted, unless you're crazy as a coconut. And surprisingly they keep the fat content in check whilst providing plenty of protein and carbs, that'll keep you satisfied for longer and hopefully stop you from scoffing down another three or four.

## SPIRULINA GINSENG – DEFENCE BOOST

This is the mecca of ride-nutrition, those already all-over their supplements will be familiar with all the benefits of spirulina and ginseng, or claimed benefits anyway. However it is an unusual flavour but that's how you know it's good, like when you're mother tried to feed you brussell sprouts, only these will leave you satisfied not cheated.

By the way, they are Australian, and big kudos to Paula and Andy Hannagan for making something healthy taste so tasty, and keeping it local.



## ESSENTIALS

### HITS

- Tasty options with a variety of flavours
- Easy to transport

### MISSES

- Not as natural as some other 'super balls' around
- They can be heavy on the wallet.

RRP: \$3.50 - \$4.00

From: supermarkets



TESTED

# PRAXIS WORKS 1X10 DRIVETRAIN

WORDS AND PHOTOS: WIL BARRETT



The 1x drivetrain is certainly the most fashionable trend within mountain biking right now. And in many cases it makes sense. With a decent range of gears out back, you can get rid of that ugly front derailleur, remove one extra cable and outter from the bike, and ditch the left-hand shifter in favour of a simpler, lighter and cleaner cockpit.

## SINGLE RING DEMAND

Santa Cruz-based Praxis Works is best known for their tough cold-forged chainrings and high quality bottom bracket solutions, but it's their new narrow-wide chainrings and 10-speed MTB cassettes that have been garnering the most attention lately.

Many riders are attracted to the idea of adding more gearing range to their existing 10-speed drivetrains, without necessarily upgrading to a whole new 1x11 group set. The currently accepted solution is to add a 'Booster Cog' to a 10-speed cassette, by swapping out one of the middle cogs in exchange for a 40/42t cog on the end.

Looking to achieve a similar goal, Praxis has taken an all-in approach by choosing to build an entirely new 10-speed cassette that features optimised ratios for the 11-40t spread.

## SLICK FINISH

As with the Girder cranks and M30 bottom bracket we've previously reviewed, the Praxis cassette has a very high quality fit and finish. The first 8 sprockets are made from steel, while the larger 34t and 40t cogs are made from 7075-T6 Alloy that's hard anodised for durability. Including the orange anodised locking, the Praxis cassette came out to 324 grams on the digital scales, making it lighter than a SRAM X9 or Shimano Deore XT equivalent.

Installation is straightforward. The cassette slides straight onto a standard freehub body, and you can use either SRAM or Shimano 10-speed rear derailleurs with a Medium or Long cage.

The larger 40t sprocket warrants a few extra turns of the derailleur's B-Tension screw to help the upper jockey wheel clear its teeth. You'll also want to keep an eye on chain length too, but we'd always recommend fitting a new chain with a new cassette anyway. For bonus performance gains, ensure your derailleur hanger is aligned, your gear cable is fresh, and the cassette locking is torqued to spec.

## ON THE TRAIL

I tested the Praxis cassette in combination with a 32t narrow-wide chainring and the Turn Girder M30 crankset. Shifting was taken care of by a Shimano SLX shifter and long-cage rear derailleur, with a Deore HG54 chain connecting it all together.

In a very unexciting way, the Praxis cassette simply works. It shifts cleanly both up and down the cassette, thanks to the machined ramps and pickup teeth that help guide the chain across the sprockets. As I found however, B-Tension is crucial to optimal performance. Dial in too much and shifting degrades rapidly. I also had to back off the tension in the SLX derailleur's Shadow Plus mechanism, as the shifting was very heavy to begin with. Get those two adjustments right however, and you'll enjoy surprisingly slick performance.

Compared to a regular 10-speed cassette, the Praxis version runs an almost identical spread for the smallest 8 sprockets. This allows you to maintain a smooth cadence along flatter sections of trail and for descending. It's only when you get to the 34t and 40t sprockets where the gearing jumps are larger, and there is just a fraction more hesitation from the derailleur when engaging these low-range gears.

That said, the 40t was a welcome option for tackling steep tech climbs, and combined with the 32t chainring, I was rarely looking for more gears on my local trails. It was only on extended fireroad climbs in the mountains where I was attempting to hit my non-existent left hand shifter.

Durability has proven excellent throughout testing, even with those two larger alloy sprockets. However, because of the added B-Tension, there is less chain wrap and therefore a chance of faster wearing. I currently have a Lindarets Goat Link on the way, which is designed to replace the B-Link on a Shimano rear derailleur to provide added chain wrap with the larger cassette. Look out on AMBMag.com.au for my follow up review on that guy.

## OUR TAKE

As it stands, the Praxis cassette is without doubt the best option for adding range to your 1x10 or 2x10 setup. It's made well, it shifts well, and it doesn't require an engineering degree to install. If you already have a perfectly good 10-speed drivetrain and you're looking for added climbing gears without having to shell out for a whole new group set, the Praxis cassette is the best option out there.

## ESSENTIALS

### HITS

- Bonus range
- Cost effective upgrade

### MISSES

- Some fine-tuning required for performance

RRP: \$189

From: dawsonsportsgroup.com.au



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# ADVENTURES ABOVE BRIGHT

WORDS: SEBASTIAN JAYNE PHOTOS: TIM BARDSLEY-SMITH

**“GREAT THINGS HAPPEN WHEN MEN AND MOUNTAINS MEET”. I DON’T THINK WILLIAM BLAKE HAD MOUNTAIN BIKES IN MIND WHEN THOSE WORDS DRIPPED FROM HIS QUILL. POOR HIM! THE GREATNESS HE ALLURED TO COULD BE THE CHALLENGE THAT MOUNTAINS CAN OFFER US. THE CHALLENGE TO CONQUER AND NOT BE CONQUERED.**

At its core, rocks and dirt are all that make mountains stand tall. But this bland list of ingredients has the power to create an adventure. An adventure to breathe rarefied air while looking out across landscapes that those who don’t dare climb will never see. But of course the descent down is the real reward.

The small town of Bright in the Victorian Alps is able to boast some big mountains and epic singletrack in its vicinity, all with their own unique and amazing experiences. Mt Hotham, Falls Creek and Mt Buffalo are climbed year round by World Tour pros and weekend warriors alike. Mountain bikers from all around frequent the awesome singletrack that Bright has to offer. But what about the road less travelled, or perhaps the climb less climbed? Ditching the bitumen and looking past the main mountain bike areas, you can gain access to some amazing climbs to both test and reward you.

As an extreme example, the climb up to Buffalo Gap, which averages some 11% for 7km can make for an epic test but can

also reward with some of the most amazing views of Alpine Victoria. Or maybe closer to town, and slightly more subdued, you can climb 8.7km at 6.3% up to Clearspot lookout. And, of course, you can ride to the heights of Mystic Mountain, climbing up through the Mystic Bowl, where the bulk of the dedicated mountain bike tracks that have made Bright famous weave through the forest.

Most ascents climb through pine plantations and native bush land. Gradually producing bettering views as the tree lines break and you see out across the Ovens Valley or even the snow-capped peaks of the higher mountains. Depending on your luck and, of course, how acquainted you are with your stem at the time; you may see one of the many Australian animals that call the Alps home such as the elusive lyrebird. Deer and wild horses can also be seen wandering the mountains.

Heading further afield from Bright you can unlock many all day adventure options that the Alpine National Park (ANP) provides. Stretching from Central Gippsland to the NSW border, the ANP has a myriad of dirt roads and rougher 4WD tracks just waiting to be explored. All set in untouched natural bush land. Well, untouched apart from the roads, signposts, and helipad clearings! All of which are tolerable, when you look south to see nothing but dense bush land.

Once you’re on top of the range you can really appreciate just how big Australia is. To look out across mountains and see





nothing but endless bush is so unique. It's a stark contrast to the parts of Europe I've been to, where you couldn't travel more than a few kilometres without seeing a building or small town. Diversity is key to making an area a great family destination for bike riders. And with the added expansion of Bright's dedicated mountain bike infrastructure coming at the hands of Dirt Art and local volunteers, Bright is set to be vying for the number one spot as Australia's greatest biking regions. But remember, just off the beaten path is a whole world waiting for you to explore.

## GETTING THERE

Bright is located 1:30 hours away from Albury and 3:30 hours from Melbourne. Most of the tracks are located within 10 minutes of the centre of Bright. The Alpine National Park can be accessed via the Buckland Valley Rd. Checking Strava can give you a great insight into the wider area and what it contains!

## TECHNICAL NATURE

The singletrack around Bright have a great level of variety from national level DH and XCO tracks to family orientated river cruises. The technical nature of the trails mainly comes from gradient and less from 'features'. Most tracks do have very rooty sections, which can raise the technical nature of the track in wet weather.

## YOU'LL NEED

The sparseness of human habitation can make adventures further from Bright both a blessing



and very risky. Starting with the obvious risks associated with mountain biking from bike mechanicals to crashes. You also need to remember that you're entering a powder keg of flammable material. Checking the CFA website for the fire danger rating and downloading the Fire Ready app to your phone can go a long way to making your adventure a whole lot safer. Also knowing what you are going to do in the event of either an injury or fire can be a huge help.

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

The temperature change can be quite a lot from the bottom of a climb to the top. Taking a lightweight vest can make all the difference to your overall enjoyment and safety. General weather conditions can also change abruptly being in the Alps. Especially over a 6-hour adventure, being adequately prepared can make all the difference.

## BEST TIME OF YEAR

Early to mid spring can be a great time to visit Bright. The closer to winter you are the more likely you are to view the snow-capped mountains, or end up riding in the snow! Summer can get very hot varying from extremely dry to extremely humid conditions.

## LOCAL BIKE SHOPS

Cyclepath Bright is the most established shop in Bright with All Terrain Cycles just opening up a new shop to go along with their Mansfield and Mt Buller stores. Both are great stops to get some inside local knowledge!

## WHERE TO STAY

Bright is well setup to cater for cyclists, Adina Lodge on Ashwood Avenue is a comfortable option right on the rail trail. They have self-catering apartments with ground level parking and access, plus a secure garage, washing facilities and a pool. Rates and details can be found on [adinalodge.com.au](http://adinalodge.com.au)

## WHERE TO EAT

Like any country town there are hit and miss locations – but beyond some great cafes and a lovely Thai restaurant, it's very hard to go past Bright Brewery. Not only are they completely smoke free, they are bike friendly with plenty of bike parking, have a great menu to accompany their beers, and a huge beer garden that flows down to the river. [Brightbrewery.com.au](http://Brightbrewery.com.au)

## PLACES THAT ROCK



## TRAIL ESSENTIALS

### DISTANCE

MOUNT POREPUNKAH – 11.3KM 6.6%

Difficulty – 3/5 ★★★★★  
Views – 4/5 ★★★★★

HUGGINS LOOKOUT – 2.1KM 6%

Difficulty – 1/5 ★☆☆☆☆  
Views – 2/5 ★☆☆☆☆

MYSTIC MOUNTAIN – 6.8KM 6.2%

Difficulty – 4/5 ★★★★★  
Views – 3/5 ★★★★★

CLEARSPOT – 7.5KM 7.3%

Difficulty – 3/5 ★★★★★  
Views – 3/5 ★★★★★

BUFFALO GAP – 7KM 11%

Difficulty – 5/5 ★★★★★  
Views – 5/5 ★★★★★

### RATINGS

TECHNICAL ★★★★★  
FITNESS ★★★★★  
CROSS COUNTRY ★★★★★  
TRAIL ★★★★★  
ALL-MTN ★★★★★  
DOWNHILL ★★★★★  
JUMP ★★★★★



# RIDING OBSTACLES BLIND

WORDS: JARED RANDO PHOTOS: JONATHAN RENTON

We all know that feeling all too well - we've rolled up to something on a trail and thought "here we go!" without too much about what lies ahead.... Next thing you know your heart is in your mouth and about 3 seconds later a relieved cheer is let out just before you begin to contemplate just how badly things could have gone wrong.

Riding anything challenging for the first time requires a good amount of assessment and preparation, but as we get more confident, we often decide to assess and prepare less (or not at all!) and quite often have a crack before we are really ready.

The truth is though, simply slowing down and having a quick look can only take about a second, and can keep you a hell of a lot safer out on the trail. Here's a quick rundown of how you can use your bike and some very basic skills to assess something quickly on the trail.



## STEP 1- SCAN AHEAD

If you are riding something for the first time, you should always be looking further up the trail than you normally would and perhaps not riding at full tilt. Pick a comfortable cruising speed and scan ahead as much as you're comfortable with. If the trail begins to get hairy, slow down and scan more. If it is simple, you can speed up. When you spot something you're not sure about, begin to hit the brakes, get your weight back and really take note of what's ahead.



## STEP 2- STAND TALL

As you get closer, slow down even more and stand up high on your bike. By the time you stand up straight and lean forward you'll be amazed at just how much you can see. From here you need to begin to assess what's ahead. How long is the jump? How steep is the roll in? What line do I need to take? You can do all this as you are slowly creeping towards the obstacle. If you have any doubt, it's time to stop, get off and have a look. If a path is clear, keep rolling forward and assessing where you are going to ride.





#### STEP 4- COMMIT

Once you commit, you should commit 100%. With a steep roll in, panicking and hitting the brakes as you crest the top can send you over the bars. Panicking before a jump will see you come up short. Think of a similar obstacle and how you would ride it confidently. Here, once I'm committed I've got my weight back and braking just enough to control my speed. Look ahead to the exit- don't look at the tree on the side or the rock you need to miss or that's where you'll end up!

#### STEP 3- DROPPING IN

You should always take one final pause before committing. Here I'm doing a quick track stand whilst assessing the roll in. I've picked my line and I'm just checking the exit to ensure there's nothing which is going to catch me out and also looking for anything I need to look out for. If it were a jump and I could spot the landing, I'd be doing this at a point where I could generate enough speed to clear the landing. The key thing is giving yourself one final opportunity to pull out. If there's any doubt in your mind, get off and have a closer look. You can always come back another day.



#### STEP 5- CONTINUE ON

Once you've cleared the obstacle, hit the brakes, slow down and reassess what's ahead. Here, as soon as I've finished the roll in, I've slowed down, begin to look up, stand tall and scan ahead once again. At this point it's easy to be so happy with what you've just done that you forget to look ahead. Hit the brakes, take a breath and look up before you continue on.





# PUTTING SPORTS GELS TO THE TEST

WORDS AND PHOTOS: ZOE WILSON

One look in your local bike shop and you'll notice a whole host of gels, bars, tablets and powders all proclaiming magical endurance-extending powers. We took five different gels for a test drive. See how they stack up.

[Intro] To get you through a ride longer than an hour, you need to top up your fuel stores as you go. This means taking in some carbohydrates, your body's first choice for fuel during exercise. Unlike during the rest of the day, when you're exercising you're after fast carbs. The quicker the carbs are digested, the quicker they will get to your muscles, so sugar is usually the best choice during exercise. Sports gels can be a really convenient option to take fuel on board without too much fuss. The problem is there are countless varieties out there, so how do you tell which is right for you?

## WHAT'S IN A SPORTS GEL?

Sports gels are a concentrated form of carbohydrate (sugar). They're usually 65-70% carbohydrate and usually made with easily digestible sugars such as sucrose, glucose or fructose in a form that is easy to take. They are much more concentrated than sports drinks, so you get a biggest fuel boost in a smaller volume. Most gels contain around 20-25g of carbohydrate, no protein or fat and may have added nutrients such as caffeine and electrolytes.

Sports gels all vary slightly in their nutrition composition as well as their taste, texture and packaging so it's important you find one that suits you and you practice with it in training.



## HOW MANY SHOULD I TAKE?

When racing, you should aim to take in 30-60g of carbohydrate per hour, or up to 90g per hour if you'll be on the track for longer than two-and-a-half hours at a high intensity. This usually equates to approximately 2-3 gels per hour but you can use a mix of real food, sports drinks, sports bars and sports gels to get your carbohydrate in. It's also important to note that you should only take on more than 60g per hour if you have a mixture of glucose and fructose so you can absorb everything without gut discomfort. Many of the newer gels have this mix so you can rely solely on them for your fuel if you wish to.

It's also important that you drink every 15-20 minutes to maintain hydration as gels alone won't give you enough fluids.

## HOW WE TESTED

We had a team of three testers who each commented on the taste and texture of the gels. To keep it an even playing field, all gels were lime or citrus flavoured.



### CLIFF SHOT ENERGY GEL

#### WHAT'S IN IT?

24g carbohydrate plus 25mg caffeine in each 35g gel. The caffeine is equivalent to half an espresso. Contains glucose only.

#### HITS

The caffeine content will give you an extra performance boost by reducing your perception of fatigue.

#### MISSES

As it doesn't have a mix of carbs, and with the caffeine content you won't be able to have more than two per hour. You'll need to alternate a few different gels throughout a long ride.

#### VERDICT

Although the caffeine hit is great, this was too thick and goopy and our tasters struggled to get it down.



### WINNERS ENERGY GEL

#### WHAT'S IN IT?

30g carbohydrate per 45g gel plus a small amount of the electrolytes sodium and potassium.

#### HITS

A mild flavour but a little thick so you need to drink water to wash it down. Also, the highest in carbohydrate so you only need one to two per hour to meet the recommendations.



### ENDURA SPORTS ENERGY GEL

#### WHAT'S IN IT?

26g carbohydrate plus 8.5mg caffeine and 90mg of sodium per 35g gel. Contains a mix of glucose and fructose for better absorption.

#### HITS

Good consistency and easy to drink. The mix of sugars means you can have three per hour giving you 78g carbs.

#### MISSES

A really strong chemical aftertaste somewhat akin to the flavour dishwashing liquid which is probably not what you're after mid-ride.

#### VERDICT

Good texture but awful flavour!



#### MISSES

No mix of carbs so you will only be able to take two per hour maximum. Also contains sodium benzoate (221) which some people are intolerant to, so it may not agree with you.

#### VERDICT

Easy to get as it's stocked in supermarkets. A good whack of carbs with a mild flavour. This one is a go-er.



### HIGH5 ENERGY GEL

#### WHAT'S IN IT?

23g carbohydrate per 40g gel. Contains a mix of glucose and fructose for better absorption.

#### HITS

Excellent juice-like consistency. Easy to open and a mild flavour which was quite pleasant. The mix of sugars means you can take three per hour giving you 69g carbohydrates.

#### MISSES

No caffeine but you can get a caffeinated version if you wanted to swap a few of those in throughout your ride.

#### VERDICT

The best of the bunch. Definitely a hit with our tasters.



### ETIXX ENERGY GEL

#### WHAT'S IN IT?

24g carbohydrate plus a good 156mg sodium per 40g gel. Contains a mix of carbs for better absorption.

#### HITS

Good consistency and limey flavour. Can be diluted in 500ml water to make an isotonic sports drink due to the sodium.

#### MISSES

Taste was divisive - some found it too strong.

#### VERDICT

Great texture and multipurpose which is excellent but the flavour is not for everyone.





# GO GO GREEN SMOOTHIE

WORDS AND PHOTO: MEG GILLMER TWITTER: @THEWHOLESOMEATH

Green smoothies are a great way to get nutrients into your body whether it be post-ride or first thing in the morning. Green smoothies are delicious, easy to digest and extremely nutrient dense. This smoothie has some carbohydrates, vitamins, essential minerals and quality fats for your body to absorb. You could consider adding a vanilla or unflavoured protein in, too.

## INGREDIENTS

1 cup milk (almond, soy, rice,)  
1/2 cup water or coconut water  
1 peeled and frozen banana  
Flesh of half an avocado  
Fresh mint leaves  
Handful baby spinach leaves  
2Tbs nut butter  
Handful of ice

## METHOD

1. Place all the ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.
2. Drink



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# IDENTIFYING YOUR WEAKNESSES

In previous articles I have written about the importance of training to your weaknesses. So many athletes make the mistake of only ever training their strengths, generally because they enjoy the types of training sessions that they are good at! As in most things in life, we become better at something the more we do it. If an athlete chooses to ride the same hill climb, at the same pace for their hill interval session each week, they are likely to become very good at climbing that one gradient in that one specific energy zone. Throughout all phases of training, it is important to be constantly aware of your biggest limiters to that next level of performance

and to continually change sessions around to work on those limiters.

In my experience as a coach, athletes are quite often not very good at identifying their own weaknesses. Most coaches will have all new athletes fill in a questionnaire with one of the questions being 'what do you see as your weaknesses?', or something similar. Commonly, I will see answers such as 'hill climbing', 'descending', 'starts', 'mental approach' etc. All are very general terms and cover a broad range of skills, energy zones and thought processes. The ability to break down each component in order to

really pin-point the specific weaknesses is a skill in itself but is well-worth taking the time to do.

Generally it's fairly easy to identify the skills and techniques you have trouble with, simply by training and racing with others on different terrain. It's simple enough to add drop-offs, jumps, log roll-overs etc. into your training sessions in order to increase proficiency in any skill areas you are lacking. Identifying which of the energy systems require improvement can, however, be more complex.

## POWER PROFILING

For those athletes training with power, various Training Software programs have taken out a lot of the guess-work involved in identifying strengths and weaknesses in terms of power output in the different energy zones. Software programs such as Today's Plan and Training Peaks use power profile graphs to show power to weight values across different time periods. The athlete's data is compared to data collected from various levels of cyclists throughout the world.

Functional Threshold Power (FTP) is considered best reflected as 95% of your 20min average

power, Aerobic Capacity as 5min average power; Anaerobic Capacity as 1min average power and Neuromuscular power as 5sec average power. There are of course over-laps with the energy systems used; however data recorded from these time periods give a great indication of where an athlete requires more work in order to become a better all-round rider.

As mountain bikers it is important to be proficient in producing power across all of the energy zones. Threshold power perhaps has the most importance, as a higher threshold power will mean you can hold a faster pace for a longer period of time and therefore last the race distance that much better. Increasing your power in the

5sec to 5min time periods however, will mean that you will better cope with the fast starts, punch-up all those shorts climbs, cope better with the accelerations and attack your competitors a whole lot better.

The following graphs show power profiles of 4 different mountain bikers. I have made comments on how each athlete can best work on their weaknesses and become a better all-round mountain biker. Note, that I have ignored the last column depicting 60min power (functional threshold), as these athletes have very rarely completed a 60min max effort with fresh legs and therefore the values could well be higher than those shown.

### POWER PROFILE: SINGLE GROUP LAST 100 DAYS

World Champion - World Record Holder

World Class - International Pro

Exceptional - Domestic Pro

Excellent - Cat 1

Very Good - Cat 2

Good - Cat 3

Moderate - Cat 4

Fair - Cat 5

5 sec

1 min

5 min

20 min

60 min

### ATHLETE 1

Athlete 1 has great aerobic capacity as seen by a high 5min power to weight. I would recommend she work more on lifting threshold power with some longer, sustained intervals of 10-20min at about 88-94% threshold power (known as "sweet spot" range)

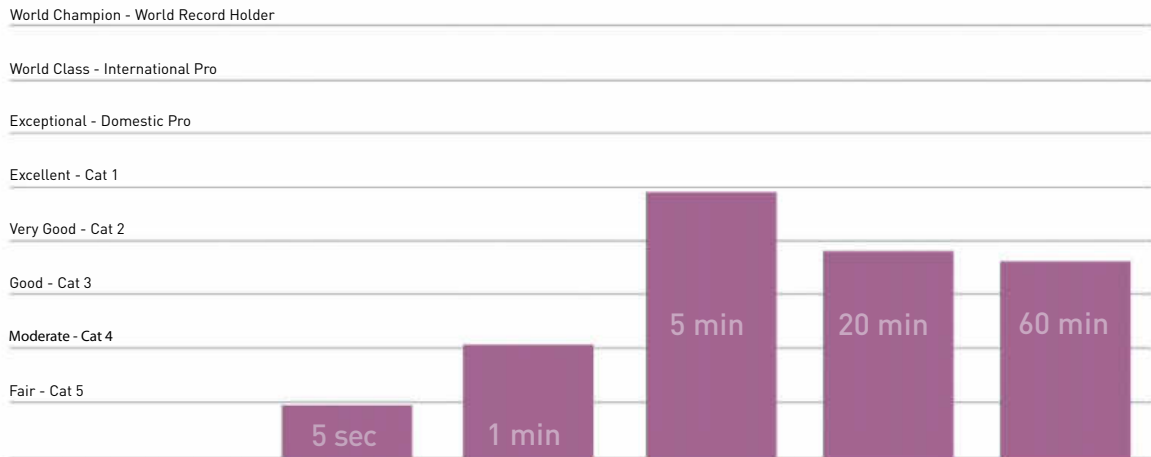


## ATHLETE 2

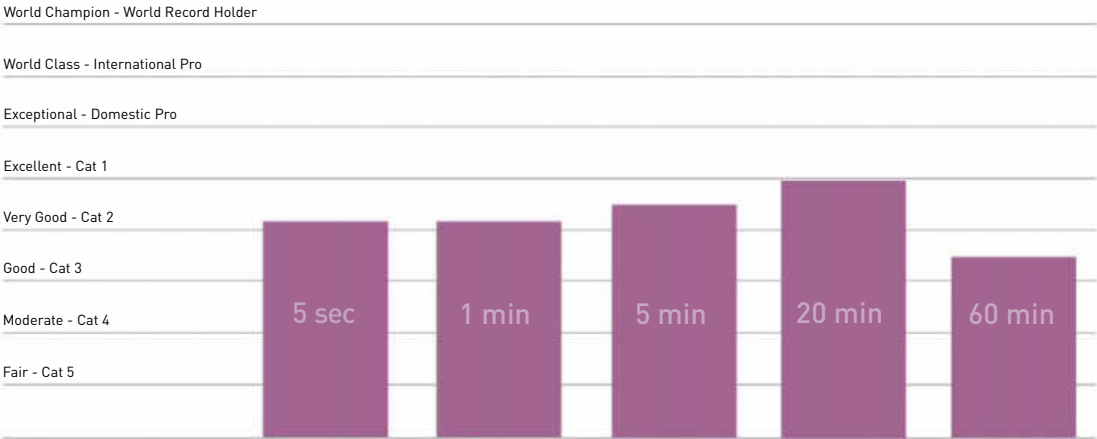
Athlete 2 also has very good aerobic capacity as well as high threshold power (I find this the most common pattern in endurance athletes). I would recommend he work more on anaerobic capacity and neuromuscular power, by including hard paced intervals of 10sec to 1.5min in length. This will really help with all of those short punchy climbs as well as accelerations out of corners etc.



### POWER PROFILE: SINGLE GROUP LAST 100 DAYS



### POWER PROFILE: SINGLE GROUP LAST 180 DAYS



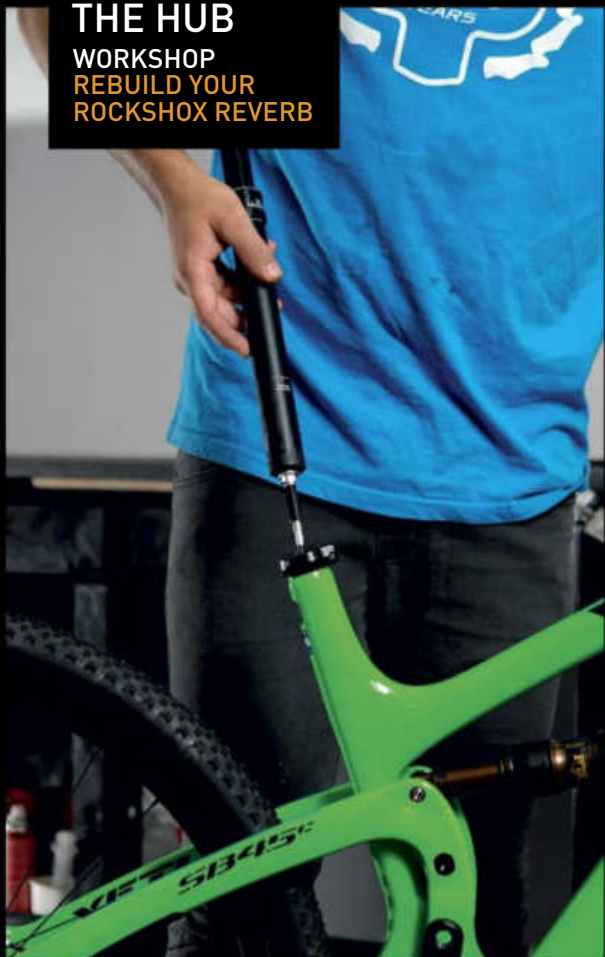
## ATHLETE 3

Athlete 3 is fairly even across the board. I would recommend including sessions using all of the different energy zones, depending on the time of year and phase of training.

For those athletes not lucky enough to train with power, I can highly recommend completing a Power Profile test. In my opinion, this test can be more beneficial than a MAP or Vo2 test, as you can use the data results to better channel your training to the areas that are most needed. Generally, the test protocols used involve a few sprint intervals from standing and rolling start, an anaerobic interval and a Vo2 interval, all with adequate rest time in-between so that you can put full effort into each. Threshold power is not usually tested in the same session as the body would be too fatigued for accurate measurement.



## THE HUB WORKSHOP REBUILD YOUR ROCKSHOX REVERB



# REBUILDING YOUR ROCKSHOX REVERB

Words: Joe Dodd Photos: Chris Herron

This issue we are going to cover a RockShox Reverb service. This will be a bit more in depth than just a lever bleed. It shouldn't be forgotten that hydraulic dropper posts need servicing too, just like hydraulic brakes and suspension.

### STEP ONE

Remove the seat post from your bike. To do this you will have to undo the seat clamp and feed the hose through the frame. You may need to cut and zip ties or undo cable guides in order to do this. Once you have enough hose fed through to expose the bottom of the seat post you can undo the connectamajig. This is done using a 9mm and a 6mm spanner. Undo this nice and gently as it shouldn't be done up that tight.



### STEP TWO

Remove the saddle from the post. Don't forget to mark your saddle position for when you're rebuilding the post.



### STEP THREE

Undo the air cap with a 9mm socket and let all of the air out.



### TOOLS REQUIRED



### STEP FOUR

Now look at the bottom of the post and you will see a circlip. Grab your circlip pliers and carefully undo the clip. This will allow you to slide the outer sleeve down exposing the seal head. You will probably notice how dirty your post is now.







### STEP FIVE

Next step is to pop a pair of suitable sized shaft clamps around the inner shaft. As pictured and carefully undo the seal head. Be careful here. You don't want to move the inner shaft up or down or knock it. If you do the post will have to be fully rebuilt. Keep the post upright from now on.



### STEP SIX

Undo the top cap and you will be able to slide the outer sleeve off exposing a set of brass bushings. Remove these and clean the post and outer sleeve.



### STEP SEVEN

Out of your complete service kit for your post you will find a number of packets of these with different numbers on them. The numbers correlate to the number of lines on the brass bush. This post had 6 in it. Rub a thin coating of slick honey over the bushings and the grooves that they sit in. The grease should hold the bushings in place. You may need to replace any other worn bushings that you can see on the seal head.



### STEP EIGHT

Slide the outer sleeve onto the post. There is only one way you can do this, so check out the grooves in the over sleeve before you attempt to slide it back on. Replace the seal and foam ring that are around the inner shaft.



### STEP NINE

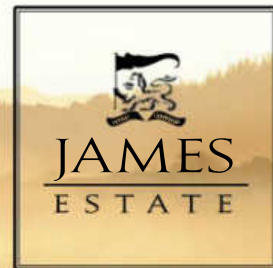
Pop the seal head back in gently and tightened to 5.7-7.9 NM. Slide the outer tube up and replace the circlip.



### STEP TEN

You can now do up the top cap to 27-29 NM. when this is all done you can put air back into the post. You need to put 250psi back into it. Replace the air cap and your post is ready to go back into your bike. Hopefully running smoother and cleaner than before.





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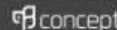
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## RIDER PROFILE

NAME: Jordan Prochyra  
 AGE: 21  
 HOMETOWN: Perth, WA  
 SPONSORS: Giant Australia, Fox Head Australia  
 FAVOURITE TRACK: Andorra or Mt Saint Anne



# THE BLACK PEARL

## JORDAN PROCHYRA'S GIANT GLORY

WORDS AND PHOTOS: SEAN LEE

Jordan Prochyra is a rider from Perth, Western Australia who has quickly flown out from under the radar. He's been on the Australian circuit for years but with some recent overseas trips he's tuned up not only the heat but the pace.

**How do you like the bike, compared to your previous bikes?**

I got this bike in February just before the Thredbo national round from the guys at Giant Australia. Giant really stepped it up a notch with the new Glory! With the new wheel size and improved geometry it's by far the best downhill bike I've ever ridden. A big leap forward from the previous model.

**How is your suspension set up?**

I find I run my bike quite hard and fast compared to most, on the rough and faster tracks I think it helps a lot to keep the bike tracking well. I think my riding style is pretty composed and neutral, but over the front a bit if anything. I like to think it looks like I'm having fun when I'm riding!

**What is most important to you when setting up a bike?**

For me it's getting the stack height and roll on my bars just right. Then moving onto the suspension after that.

**What are your results from this season?**

2015 has been a good learning year for me. After a few top 10 results at national rounds and an 8th at the National Championships in Bright, I won 2 state DH rounds in WA and won 2 WA Gravity Enduro rounds as well as taking the overall WAGE series win. Overseas I got 53rd at my first World Cup at Mont Sainte Anne, and was later selected to race World Champs in Andorra where I placed 55th.

**What races do you plan to do this coming season?**

I plan to do most of the Australian national series this summer and the World Cup round in Cairns, then onto 3 more World Cups in Europe and hopefully do well enough to be selected for World Champs again in Val di Sole!

### SPECS

FRAME - 2015 Giant Glory, large  
 FORK- RockShox Boxxer Team  
 SHOCK- RockShox Vivid R2C  
 CRANKS- Sram X01 DH 165mm  
 GROUPSET- Sram X01 DH  
 BARS - Nukeproof  
 STEM - Funn  
 GRIPS - ODI Ruffian  
 WHEELS - Nukeproof/Sunringle rims laced to DT hubs  
 TYRES - Maxxis Minion DHF 2.5" front and rear. Tubeless on the back.

NOTES: Jordy rides an almost stock Glory 0, with his preferred cockpit and upgraded rims. He found the stock rims to be too soft, but his current Nukeproof rims have lasted several WC races and a week in Whistler. He rides Mallet pedals usually, but the Bali APDHC race was so loose that he's switched to flats for the week.



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# HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE

## A BIKEPACKER GOES STAGE RACING

Words: Arran Pearson

I love bikepacking – the simplicity of just you and your bike, out in the wilderness, minimal gear and relying on your own sense of adventure to carry you through the day and into the next. But sometimes I see something so amazing or experience such an awesome section of trail that I wish I had a group of mates around to discuss the day's events or relax with a cold beer without the (sometimes) relentless pressure to simply keep going.

Hence a decision to organise a trip to race in the Cape to Cape MTB stage race in Western Australia. Why the Cape to Cape? Well, I've got lots of friends that have done it and the consensus has been that the trails are awesome, the racing is close and hard and the organisation is top notch. In addition, its only 4 ½ hours from my current home in Singapore so its actually logistically easier to get there than it was from Sydney!

I'm a member of the ANZA cycling club in Singapore so decided that if I was going to go and do a stage race then it would be great to organise a club trip around the event – after all, the racing was pretty much going to be done by midday and the social aspect was as appealing as the actual riding and racing. At this point I began to realise that there are some key differences between organising for me and organising for a group that I hadn't figured into the planning process.

### TO COMPARE AND CONTRAST.

Earlier this year I decided to give the Munda Biddi trail a good go and see what sort of time would be do-able as an end-to-end self supported bikepack. I picked a date, organised flights (cheap on the way over and flexi for the return) and then sorted transport from Perth to Albany and booked hotels for the two nights I'd worked out I needed before starting on the trail. Organising done.

Now for a group trip... yikes! Firstly I was bringing the family so accommodation needed to be of a

'certain standard' shall we say. Oh and because I'd opened it up to my cycling club (we have around 400 members) the number of people that I was booking for was also an unknown... oh and how to get the unknown number of people (and bikes) from Perth to Margaret River?

I quickly worked out that whilst democracy is fine in theory, for this sort of thing a benevolent dictatorship was much more appropriate – and at times not so benevolent! Whilst lots of people were interested, tying down those who were committed was somewhat more challenging. Eventually accommodation was selected, cars worked out (people mover and van) entries obtained and all was on track.

Well sort of. Now we have small children and the thought of getting off a 5 hour flight and then driving for 3 ½ hours is not our idea of fun so we booked flights on the premise that we'd overnight in Perth and then drive down the next morning. I also don't like to be too rushed before racing so had timed things to get there the day before the race. This resulted in mass confusion about what flights were

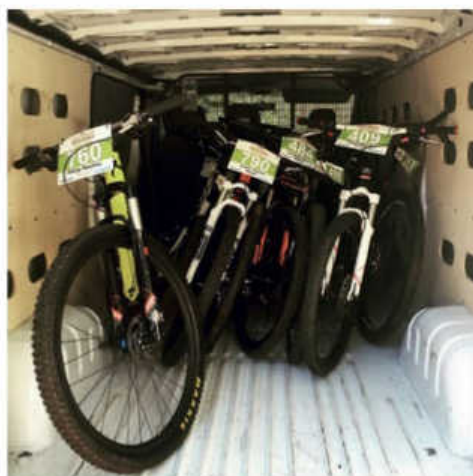
booked and who was going to stay where.

Anyway, suffice to say that things were lost in translation and it was only by some small miracle that we all managed to get ourselves to the same location to pile into the cars and find our accommodation. Strangely, a couple of friends who had made their own arrangements for flights and cars reported a much less stressful experience.

Well, at least we had made it to the start. We still had to manage to get ourselves to and from the start line every day. Now you'd think with 8 racers across 2 cars this would be a relatively easy task. Have you ever tried to herd cats? Well getting 8 adults into two cars and working out who is going to drive where and catch shuttles to retrieve vehicles is much worse than that! Oh and you'd think that we'd have that cracked by the end of the first day... yeah... no.

My vision was that after the race we'd all sit back with a couple of quiet ones and talk bike stuff until it was time to find some amazing repast in the evening. Well, it turns out that sitting at the finish line (in sometimes less than ideal weather) trying to entertain a 4 year old and a 6 year old isn't actually that much fun so the reception at the finish line from my long suffering wife was less 'Great effort babe!' and more 'Get the kids out of my sight'. Not the relaxing experience I had perhaps envisioned (although at least I was in no danger of sleeping in and missing the start).

Despite all of this we all managed to have a good time – the event was great and all made it through relatively unscathed and most tellingly, all are keen to go again (well except the family... apparently a week of babysitting and being a chauffeur isn't that much fun). But as for me, the lesson learnt is that sometimes the magic of that solitary experience whilst your out in the trail lies in the solitude.







# THE AMB PHOTO COMPETITION

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Aaron Sullivan sent in this great photo from a ride at sunset – all he had to say was:

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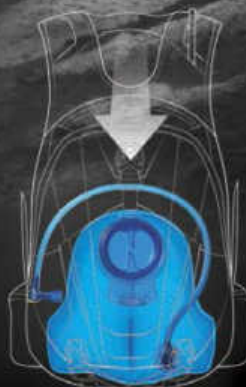


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